SSHRC CRSH

Evaluation of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program

Final Report

July 21, 2008

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada
Canada

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PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABORIGINAL RESEARCH PILOT PROGRAM

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) is the federal agency that promotes and supports university-based research, training and knowledge mobilization in the humanities and social sciences. As expressed in *Framing Our Direction*, research in the social sciences and humanities advances knowledge and builds understanding about individuals, groups and societies – what we think, how we live, and how we interact with each other and in the world around us. Through its programs and policies, SSHRC contributes to the highest level of research excellence in Canada, and facilitates knowledge mobilization across research disciplines, universities and all sectors of society.

The decision to launch a pilot program (2004 – 2008) for aboriginal research dates back to October, 2003. At that time, growing evidence suggested that while the numbers of university-based researchers for aboriginal research were increasing, they were underrepresented in federal funding programs. SSHRC subsequently provided grant funding support to the researcher and aboriginal communities in their pursuit of aboriginal knowledge. What follows is the formative evaluation of the SSHRC Aboriginal Research Pilot Program.

The level of risk for this program was considered relatively high given the objectives of the program. As part of SSHRC's Risk-Based Evaluation Plan for 2006-2007 to 2008-2009, this evaluation is intended to assist SSHRC senior management decision-making with respect to the renewal of the program and improvement. Several evaluation issues were highlighted including design and delivery, program outputs and short-term outcomes, and overall relevance.

The evidence presented in this innovative and groundbreaking evaluation reveals that SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program is on track to achieving its objectives and expected outcomes. The pilot program is contributing to the advancement of SSHRC's strategic directions on a number of fronts. Through its promotion of both indigenous and scientific knowledge, this pilot program is effectively nurturing the development of an Aboriginal research paradigm that is rooted in interdisciplinarity and intercultural exchange. Presenting new opportunities for fostering the work of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers and students, the pilot program is contributing to the social and economic development of Aboriginal communities as well as Canadian society as a whole. In order to ensure the continued success of this initiative, the evaluation produced several recommendations aimed at improving the program's efficiency. SSHRC management has agreed to suggested improvements and enhancements to the program. These are contained in the *Summary Management Response*.

This evaluation was prepared by independent consultants contracted by SSHRC's Corporate Performance and Evaluation Division. I would like to thank the external team from Natalie Kishchuk Recherche et évaluation inc (Natalie Kishchuk, Jill Torrie, Kahente Horn-

Miller, Clothilde Légaré-Dionne, and Carole Gagnon) for their professional diligence, dedication and hard work on this important study. It should also be noted that the views expressed in this evaluation are those of the external team, and do not necessarily reflect the views of SSHRC. These can be found in the above mentioned summary management response.

The work of the consulting team was ably supported and guided by SSHRC's Corporate Performance and Evaluation staff, who included Courtney Amo, Nicole Michaud, Jessica Hogue, Walid Hammoud, Jocelyne Manseau-Mandeville and Michael Bazant.

Special thanks also goes to staff of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program including: Gisèle Yasmeen, Marc Fonda, Craig McNaughton, Laurent Messier, Murielle Gagnon, Tariq Bhatti and Mathieu Ravignat. Their knowledge, experiential wisdom and cooperation in providing program documentation and data were instrumental to this study.

On behalf of SSHRC, I would like to express my gratitude to the evaluation's Panel of Knowledge Keepers. The Panel included Peter Decontie (Firekeeper),Herb Belcourt, Clarence Chabot, Kanahsohon Kevin Deer, Imelda Perley, Mary Ellen Googoo, and Peter Irniq. The Panel met in Ottawa to discuss the report and its findings. Their insights helped ensure that the report and its recommendations were reflective of the wisdom and knowledge of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Knowledge Keepers.

As well, special acknowledgement and appreciation is extended to the Selection Board that helped identify members for the Panel of Knowledge Keepers: Claudette Commanda, Lisa Sterling, Carla Moore, Audrey Poitras, and Donna Goodleaf. The Board worked independently to ensure that the Panel included members with a keen interest in the questions central to the Aboriginal Research Pilot program, while being representative of the First nations, Métis and Inuit communities and of Canada's regional diversity. The success of the Panel would not have been possible without the Board's input and generous support. I would especially wish to thank Ms. Claudette Commanda for her thoughtful advice throughout the process that led to the Panel's meeting in Ottawa.

Finally, I would like to single out the guidance provided by members of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program Evaluation Advisory Committee. Members included Peter Decontie (Elder); Keren Rice, Marlene Brant Castellano, Larry Chartrand, Gordon Christie, Verna Kirkness, David Newhouse, François Trudel, Gail Valaskakis, Craig McNaughton, Laurent Messier, and David Moorman. Their knowledge and insight ensured that the study did not 'go off track' and helped maintain momentum throughout the evaluation.

Taken together, the conscientious and respectful collaboration of all made this evaluation possible.

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Director
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STEPPING INTO A FLOWING RIVER:

EVALUATION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL'S ABORIGINAL RESEARCH PILOT PROGRAM

Final Evaluation Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONTEXT

SSHRC's Aboriginal Research pilot program was endorsed by its Governing Council in October 2003, following community consultations summarized in the document "Opportunities in Aboriginal Research: Results of SSHRC's Dialogue on Research and Aboriginal Peoples"[1].

The program description contained the following definition of Aboriginal research: "*Aboriginal research, in the context of the dialogue, derives its dynamic from traditions of thought and experience developed among, and in partnership with, First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada as well as Indigenous peoples in other parts of the world. Aboriginal research encompasses all academic fields as well as domains of knowledge specific to Aboriginal cultural traditions. Those who conduct Aboriginal research, while coming from diverse cultural traditions, are committed to both increased research leadership among Aboriginal scholars and respectful research partnerships involving both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interests and perspectives."*[2]

The program has two main objectives:

- to facilitate research on a range of policy-related issues that are of concern to Canada's Aboriginal peoples, including urban issues, economic development, the environment, education, research ethics, intellectual and cultural property, and languages and cultures; and
- to build up the capacity of the humanities and social science community to operate within, and to benefit from, an approach to Aboriginal research that fosters leadership among Aboriginal scholars and respectful research partnerships involving both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interests and perspectives.

Three competitions have now funded a total of 83 projects that were awarded a total of $12.7 million.

The purpose of the evaluation reported here is to provide appropriate, timely and useful information to facilitate upcoming discussions about the renewal of the program. The evaluation was guided by an Advisory Committee composed of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars and SSHRC staff. Given the timing of the evaluation, conducted before many of the grants have been completed, it focuses on program design and processes, program outputs and short-term outcomes, and overall relevance. The outcomes examined include: development of Aboriginal research capacity, equity in support to Aboriginal research, development of community capacity for Aboriginal research, and engagement with indigenous knowledge.

METHODS

The overall evaluation design combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Primarily descriptive, it incorporated comparative elements where possible and relevant. The data collection strategies included:

- Review of project files and program database;
- Case studies of eight funded projects;

[1] http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/background/aboriginal_backgrounder_e.pdf

[2] http://web.archive.org/web/20040603221328/www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/aboriginal_e.asp

- Telephone interviews with 81 successful and unsuccessful program applicants (response rate 61%);
- E-mail survey of 262 applicants to other SSHRC program for projects involving Aboriginal themes or issues (response rate 65%);
- Telephone focus groups or individual interviews with 14 Relevance and Adjudication Committee members;
- Interviews with four SSHRC staff.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Program design and delivery. The results of the evaluation show that the Aboriginal Research pilot program design and delivery were generally very successful:

- Uptake of the program was highly satisfactory in that it solicited new research activities from researchers whose work fit the ways of conducting Aboriginal research that were being promoted by the program and largely discouraged applications that were not a fit. The program attracted research in most regions of the country, reflecting the overall distribution of research capacity in the humanities and social sciences. Most research is focussing on First Nations communities with relatively fewer projects with Métis and Inuit peoples.
- The division of grants into Development and Research Grants is contributing to the program's capacity-building objectives, but stronger messages may be needed about reserving developmental grants for developmental work and developing scholars, and encouraging applicants to submit grant requests of any amount under the maximum.
- The two-stage review and adjudication process for the Aboriginal Research pilot program was a very effective tool in helping the program achieve its overall aims.
- The program description and objectives coupled with the two-stage adjudication process appeared to have successfully screened in the type of Aboriginal research being promoted by the program, and screened out research inconsistent with this vision.
- The feedback processes to applicants could have been used more effectively to support the capacity-building aims of the program and the development of the field and been better adapted to the needs of Aboriginal research.
- Developing satisfactory institutional arrangements for some of the organizations involved in the program presented challenges, requiring mutual adaptation on the part of SSHRC and the organizations.
- The partnership requirements of the program were effective in ensuring that research funded through the program was being conducted with and not on Aboriginal communities

Outcomes and objectives achievement. Insofar as this evaluation can assess – given that it has been conducted while most research projects are still ongoing – it shows that the Aboriginal Research pilot program is on track to achieving its objectives and expected outcomes, and in particular, that it is effectively nurturing the development of Aboriginal research within the program paradigm.

Development of Aboriginal research capacity and equity in support to Aboriginal research

- The Aboriginal Research Pilot Program is characterized by significant Aboriginal participation: 94% (which may be an underestimate) of projects involve Aboriginal principal investigators, co-investigators, collaborators or partners. Scholars of Aboriginal origin were highly successful in

obtaining grants, and the projects intended to involve large numbers of Aboriginal students. The evaluation data on the research processes to date suggest that capacity is being built among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars and students for Aboriginal research in the mode of Aboriginal research that the program aims to support, as well as furthering capacity to address and negotiate the differences between mainstream and Aboriginal research. Enhanced research capacity of personnel was also noted in terms of increasing links across disciplines and breaking down disciplinary silos, strengthening a multidisciplinary stream of reflection and analysis. Time will tell if their participation in this work will contribute to career advancement, but for some of those involved their visibility and legitimacy has been enhanced within their institutions and their disciplines.

- The program is offering significant research training opportunities for Aboriginal students, perhaps close to 500 in total. These students' experiences were indeed significant; in fact, it was generally hard to separate student researchers' experiences from those of others involved, due to special valuing of their role in the gaining and keeping of knowledge. Students were also developing a critical sense, in particular to be able to critically appraise research practices and methodologies from an Aboriginal perspective. Integration of knowledge generated through the program into teaching and curricula is helping to increase awareness and capacity for Aboriginal research among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

- Positive impacts of the Aboriginal Research pilot program on capacity for Aboriginal research through better organization and infrastructure were seen in smaller institutions, particularly those that had not before hosted SSHRC grants and perhaps among some that may eventually apply, and within SSHRC itself. Much has been learned about working with non-academic and Aboriginal organizations, and SSHRC has put policies and mechanisms in place to support its new understandings. However, much remains to be learned, especially in terms of the interface between institutional eligibility from SSHRC's perspective and organizational capacity for research from Aboriginal and non-university organizations' perspectives. SSHRC may be encouraged to reflect on the capacities it requires to sustain its commitment to the approach and mechanisms developed in this pilot.

- The program mobilized a large number of partners in a broad range of sectors. Indeed, the program design succeeded in encouraging research being conducted in a partnership mode. The partnership requirements of the program were effective in ensuring that research funded through the program was being conducted with and not on Aboriginal communities, but the data also suggest that sensitivity and flexibility are needed in assessing how partnerships fit within the program.

Development of community capacity for Aboriginal research

- A key finding of the evaluation was that in many instances, community capacity for research was already thriving and the Aboriginal Research pilot program presented an opportunity to further pursue areas of interest and concern. The evaluation data also show that the funded research is closely engaged with Aboriginal communities – likely more so than Aboriginal-related research not being funded through the program. The potential for community benefit is central to the research endeavours funded through the program and to the processes with which the research is being

conducted. Many of the projects are driven by community needs and interests; moreover, "community" is being defined and redefined in diverse ways, engaging both contemporary and traditional conceptualizations. It is too soon to tell whether the results of the research will in fact be helpful to policy development, but the community members involved in the projects believe that it will, and research teams are committed to ensuring that there is benefit to their communities.

Engagement with indigenous knowledge

- Funded projects often involve partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars, and these partnerships are sometimes new and highly promising. However, questions were raised about the underlying message of the program requirement that funded projects create a bridge between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge systems. At the same time, the program is contributing to the overtaking of disrespectful research practices sometimes experienced by Aboriginal communities with respectful and beneficial ones, and is creating spaces for the acknowledgement of issues of power and privilege in the relationships between academia and communities.

- The program is producing better understanding of the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and between their respective intellectual and cultural traditions. The evaluation data pertaining to the engagement of indigenous knowledge showed many ways in which the program is producing new understandings of these relationships, based on dialogue and relationship-building among knowledge systems. Although it is too early to state with any confidence that the program has increased awareness and appreciation of the needs, values, knowledge, experiences and contributions of Aboriginal peoples, it is contributing to valuing of Aboriginal knowledge and experiences, through projects that would likely not have been funded through other sources. Through this relatively modest pilot initiative, work is being conducted that could have major significance for the evolution of Aboriginal research paradigms.

Overall relevance. Overall, there is a very strong support from this evaluation for the ongoing relevance of the Aboriginal Research pilot program. SSHRC's analysis of the need to support, and its response to, developing the practices or mode of Aboriginal research by and with Aboriginal people was tested through the evaluation, and the findings show that this analysis and response remain valid. There is a very strong consensus among all types of evaluation participants (i.e., applicants, non-applicants, members of the Review Committees) that there is a continued need for the program and that it remains relevant.

The findings on objectives achievement also support the conclusion that the Aboriginal Research pilot program has been a relevant means to attain the collective vision developed in the early dialogue. However, it must be emphasized that the research produced through the pilot program has yet to produce all its impacts, and so that it is too soon to completely understand assess the program's value. Further evaluation conducted in five to seven years would help tell the program's whole story. At the same time, these early findings indicate that the Aboriginal Research pilot program has been successful in shaping and legitimizing a space for Aboriginal research to flourish and evolve, and in nurturing the development of research capacity so that that space will be able to grow over coming years and generations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation findings and the deliberations of the Panel of Knowledge Keepers, the following recommendations are made for the Aboriginal Research pilot program:

1. Continuation of the existing program, with minor changes to design and delivery

1.1 The evaluation results clearly support the continued offering of an Aboriginal Research program, in the intent and spirit of the current program.

1.2 Most of the program's existing design features should be retained, including the two-stage adjudication process, the review committee composition, and the division into development and research grants. However, some minor adjustments are proposed.

1.3 Ongoing reflection and development should continue on conditions of institutional eligibility as they relate to non-university organizations and in particular to Aboriginal organizations, so that mutually appropriate conditions of partnership can more easily be negotiated.

1.4 Review criteria and adjudication committees' approaches should be adjusted to allow more flexibility and inclusivity in two areas: the nature of partnerships considered to be eligible, and the types of knowledge and research experiences considered to be legitimate.

1.5 Some flexibility and clarification of program objectives are needed, in two areas: the requirement that funded projects bridge Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal research to allow balance between the desire to foster dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways of knowing , and the intents of the program with respect to research on non-Canadian Aboriginal peoples.

1.6 As both awareness of the program and Aboriginal research capacity increase, future funding levels may need to be increased to accommodate growing Aboriginal research capacity in Canada.

1.7 Ongoing performance measurement of the Aboriginal Research pilot program should continue, with a focus on capturing the results of the above proposed improvements to program design and delivery. In addition, a summative evaluation should be conducted to assess the achievement of longer-term outcomes in capacity development, knowledge production and knowledge mobilization.

2. Development of an Aboriginal Research Strategy

Following on the ideas in the original discussion documents, SSHRC should consider developing a more fully articulated Aboriginal Research Strategy, including and extending the Aboriginal Research program. This strategy should include opening and linking other SSHRC programs to Aboriginal Research, so that it eventually becomes interwoven throughout its entire mission. This strategy should:

- Offer a pre-proposal capacity development component, offering targeted communications, outreach and support to potential applicants.

- Continue to reserve a central place for students, in particular Aboriginal students, with additional supports and incentives to engage and value the contributions of undergraduate, college and high school students, and learners of all ages; scholarships and fellowships accompanying and integrated with the research grants program; and measures to ensure that Aboriginal students are supported and mentored as they face systemic barriers and challenges.

- Give particular attention to sharing of knowledge gained through Aboriginal research through special knowledge mobilization initiatives as well as ongoing dialogue about advances in ways of knowing. This should be understood as part of SSHRC's ongoing commitment to dialogue with the Aboriginal research community.

- Draw lessons from this evaluation as well as future evaluations of the program in considering the mainstreaming of Aboriginal research into its other research granting programs. Such mainstreaming would entail changes in SSHRC's organizational culture and important capacity development in SSHRC staff and peer review committees. SSHRC should use this and future evaluations of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program as a means of promoting such organizational change.

We have to start thinking ahead, 100 years from now, seven generations thinking. If we come from a place of love and vision, then there is always a beginning. If we come from a place of faith and belief, then anything can be done". Knowledge Keeper Panel Member, to the panelists and to SSHRC

.

River rocks: a result of the natural process of worldviews colliding, as new rocks tumble into roiling spring rivers and smooth off each others' edges -- a long-term process of mutual shaping – with thanks to Case Studies 2 and 4.

1. INTRODUCTION: THE PROGRAM AND ITS EVALUATION CONTEXT

1.1 Evaluation context

SSHRC's Aboriginal Research pilot program was endorsed by its Governing Council in October 2003[3], following identification of aboriginal research as one of its strategic priorities. A multi-phase engagement with researchers, Aboriginal communities, and organizations, summarized in the document "Opportunities in Aboriginal Research: Results of SSHRC's Dialogue on Research and Aboriginal Peoples"[4] led to the design and implementation of this pilot funding program, with competitions to be held every two years. Between early 2004 and 2007, the program funded three competitions.

The evaluation reported here was conducted during the last year of the program, during 2006/2007. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide appropriate, timely and useful information to facilitate upcoming discussions about the renewal of the program. The evaluation represents an opportunity for SSHRC to continue its dialogue with Aboriginal research stakeholders and to gain understanding of the learnings and new challenges arising from the program. It also responds to the assessment made in SSHRC's Risk-Based Evaluation Plan that the level of risk for this pilot program is relatively high compared to SSHRC's established programs, given its innovative character.[5] It is very important to note, however, that, because most of the grants awarded through the program are still ongoing, it is too early to assess program results in terms of the research produced or knowledge mobilization. The evaluation necessarily focuses on the extent to which the program is actualizing SSHRC's and the research communities' vision for it, through the ways the research is being conducted.

This evaluation was also conducted during a time of renewal in SSHRC's strategic vision, coincident with changes in high-level governance as well as implementation of the 2006-2011 Strategic Plan[6]. This evaluation thus affords SSHRC with an opportunity to examine the Aboriginal Research pilot program through the lens of this strategic vision, with its focus on SSHRC's contribution to vibrant and internationally renowned research environments; highly skilled and adaptable people; new understanding and innovative ideas; and broad and systematic transformation of knowledge into action.

The evaluation was guided by an Advisory Committee composed of scholars involved in Aboriginal research (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), and SSHRC staff. Its members are listed in Appendix 1. In a first step, an evaluation framework for the Aboriginal Research pilot program was developed[7] through a consultative process, relying on extensive input from the Advisory Committee and then on two information gathering strategies: review of background and program documents and data, and in-person and telephone consultations with key program stakeholders. The framework, endorsed by the Advisory Committee and approved by the Director of Corporate Performance, Evaluation and Audit, identified the evaluation questions that were to be addressed in the evaluation as well as the strategies used to collect and analyze the information reported herein.

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[3] http://www.sshrc.ca/web/about/council_reports/2003october_e.asp#3

[4] http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/background/aboriginal_backgrounder_e.pdf

[5] SSHRC's 2006-07 to 2008-09 Risk-based Evaluation Plan, CPEA Division, SSHRC, May 2006, p.4.

[6] http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/dpr-rmr/2006-2007/inst/ssh/ssh01-eng.asp#Section1_8; http://www.sshrc.ca/web/about/publications/strategic_plan_e.pdf

[7] Evaluation of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program, Evaluation framework, March 31 2007.

SSHRC's Senior Management, SSHRC's Performance and Evaluation Committee (PEC), and SSHRC's Governing Council are the principal clients for this evaluation. Other stakeholders include the Evaluation Advisory Committee, SSHRC's Standing Committee on Research Support, and Program Management as well as the beneficiaries of this pilot program.

The background document "Opportunities in Aboriginal Research: Results of SSHRC's Dialogue on Research and Aboriginal Peoples" proposed a number of strategies in addition to the creation of an Aboriginal grants program[8]. Some of these were endorsed by SSHRC's Senior Management in 2003, including, over and above the strategic grants program, a series of administrative measures: a) an analysis of Aboriginal participation in peer committees and external assessments and preparation of lists of Aboriginal scholars for use by program officers in building committees and identifying assessors; b) representation of Aboriginal peoples within SSHRC, by hiring an Aboriginal staff person to manage ongoing corporate interests in relation to Aboriginal research and peoples, identification of Aboriginal scholars as potential members of Council and Standing Committees and hiring of an Aboriginal Scientific Director; c) continued participation in identifying, analyzing and promoting Aboriginal research protocols; d) transfer of maintenance of the Aboriginal research group website to the Tri-Council Secretariat on Research Ethics; and e) preparation of a manual on Aboriginal research to orient SSHRC staff and Committee members[9]. This evaluation generally only addresses the grant program.

1.2 Program profile

1.2.1 Aboriginal Research pilot program objectives

The Aboriginal Research pilot program provided both Development Grants (up to $25,000 for up to two years), aimed at developing research partnerships and proposals, and Research Grants (up to $100,000 per year to a maximum of $250,000 over three years).

The program description contained the following definition of Aboriginal research: "*Aboriginal research… derives its dynamic from traditions of thought and experience developed among, and in partnership with, First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada as well as Indigenous peoples in other parts of the world. Aboriginal research encompasses all academic fields as well as domains of knowledge specific to Aboriginal cultural traditions. Those who conduct Aboriginal research, while coming from diverse cultural traditions, are committed to both increased research leadership among Aboriginal scholars and respectful research partnerships involving both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interests and perspectives."*[10]

Starting from the perspective that Aboriginal research is more a method of study than an area of study[11], the program had two main objectives: to facilitate research on a range of policy-related issues that are of concern to Canada's Aboriginal peoples, including urban issues, economic development, the environment, education, research ethics, intellectual and cultural property, and languages and cultures; and to build up the capacity of the humanities and social science community to operate within, and to benefit from, an approach to Aboriginal research that fosters leadership among Aboriginal scholars and respectful research

[8] http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/background/aboriginal_backgrounder_e.pdf
[9] Report on SSHRC decisions in support of an Aboriginal Research Agenda, October 2003: letter sent to Dialogue participants. See also: http://www.sshrc.ca/web/about/council_reports/2003october_e.asp#3
[10] SSHRC program descriptions: program_descriptions_aboriginal_e_2007 asp.pdf
[11] http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/background/aboriginal_backgrounder_e.pdf.

partnerships involving both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interests and perspectives. It has the following specific objectives:

To support and promote:

- research that will help develop policy in areas of concern to Aboriginal communities and other stakeholders;
- Aboriginal leadership and participation in research, and advancement of Aboriginal scholars' research careers;
- significant research training opportunities for Aboriginal students;
- new, effective research partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars;
- better understanding of how research by and with Aboriginal scholars and Aboriginal communities can and should be organized;
- better understanding of the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and between their respective intellectual and cultural traditions; and,
- increased awareness and appreciation of the needs, values, knowledge, experiences and contributions of Aboriginal peoples both in Canada and abroad. "[12]

The program was designed to complement, not replace, existing support for Aboriginal research offered through SSHRC's other programs. It intended to require a different mode of research than that funded through existing programs; through creation of strong research partnerships with Aboriginal communities (via community organizations); supporting research in Aboriginal systems of knowledge; and strategic investment in the research capacity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers interested in careers in Aboriginal research. It also intended to promote equitable treatment of Aboriginal researchers in Canada, by redressing lack of career opportunities for Aboriginal scholars; lack of respect for Aboriginal peoples and their knowledge traditions; lack of research benefits to Aboriginal communities; and lack of Aboriginal control over intellectual and cultural property[13].

The program invited applications from applicants affiliated with Canadian postsecondary institutions, Aboriginal organizations or community organizations. All applications were required to include university- or college-based scholars as well as participants from Aboriginal communities. Institutions or organizations that proposed to administer grants were required to meet the requirements for the management of SSHRC funds and hold or obtain institutional eligibility.

In contrast to most of SSHRC's other programs, the review process for the Aboriginal Research pilot program involved two steps. Applications were first screened by a Relevance committee composed of a majority of Aboriginal people from First Nation, Métis and Inuit traditions, and including policy experts and academics. This Relevance committee determined: 1) whether each proposal adequately engaged the program's objectives; 2) whether strong research partnership agreements between Aboriginal and academic communities were likely to emerge or were in place; and 3) whether the applicant had taken care to identify and respect relevant community research protocols. Successful applicants at this stage were then invited to submit proposals which were reviewed by an Adjudication committee, also composed of a majority of Aboriginal people, taking into consideration the Relevance committee's recommendations.

[12] http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/aboriginal_e.asp
[13] Aboriginal Research at SSHRC. Presentation by Craig McNaughton, October 2007.

1.2.2 Program logic models and their components

Program logic models

The program logic model shown in Figure 1 is intended to be a concise summary of the logical or causal sequence of actions in the Aboriginal Research pilot program, showing how inputs are used in activities to contribute to outputs, immediate outcomes, and longer-term goals. Figure 2 is an alternative version of the logic model, presented in circular form. The use of a circle, suggested through the framework development consultations, conveys the interrelationships among components of the model, the flowing outward movement from outputs to outcomes, and an ongoing cycle of learning.

Given the timing of the evaluation, it focused on outputs and short-term outcomes, based on stakeholders' understandings of the program's intentions and realistic expectations about what it could accomplish given the time and resources available.

SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Program –Program Logic Model

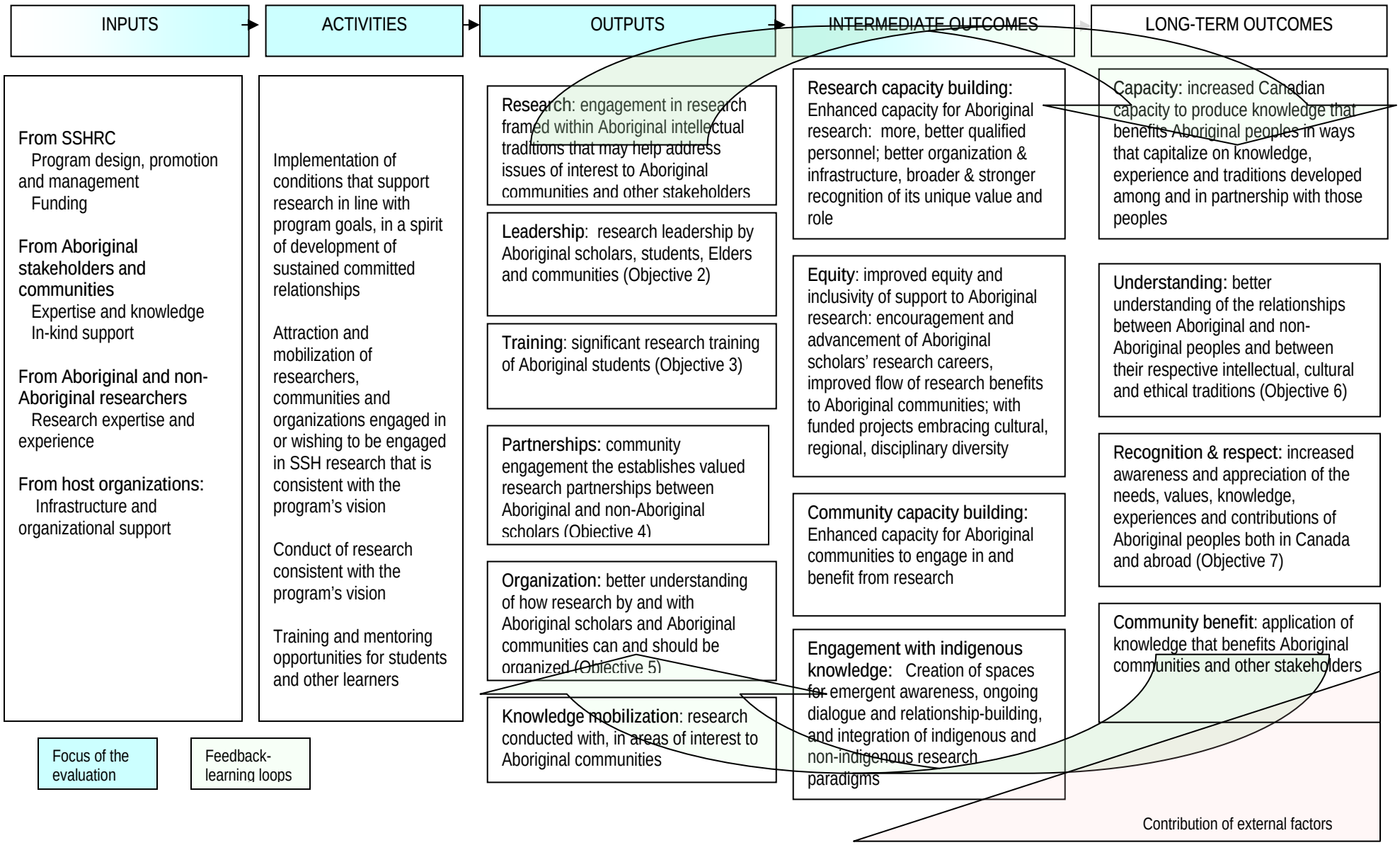
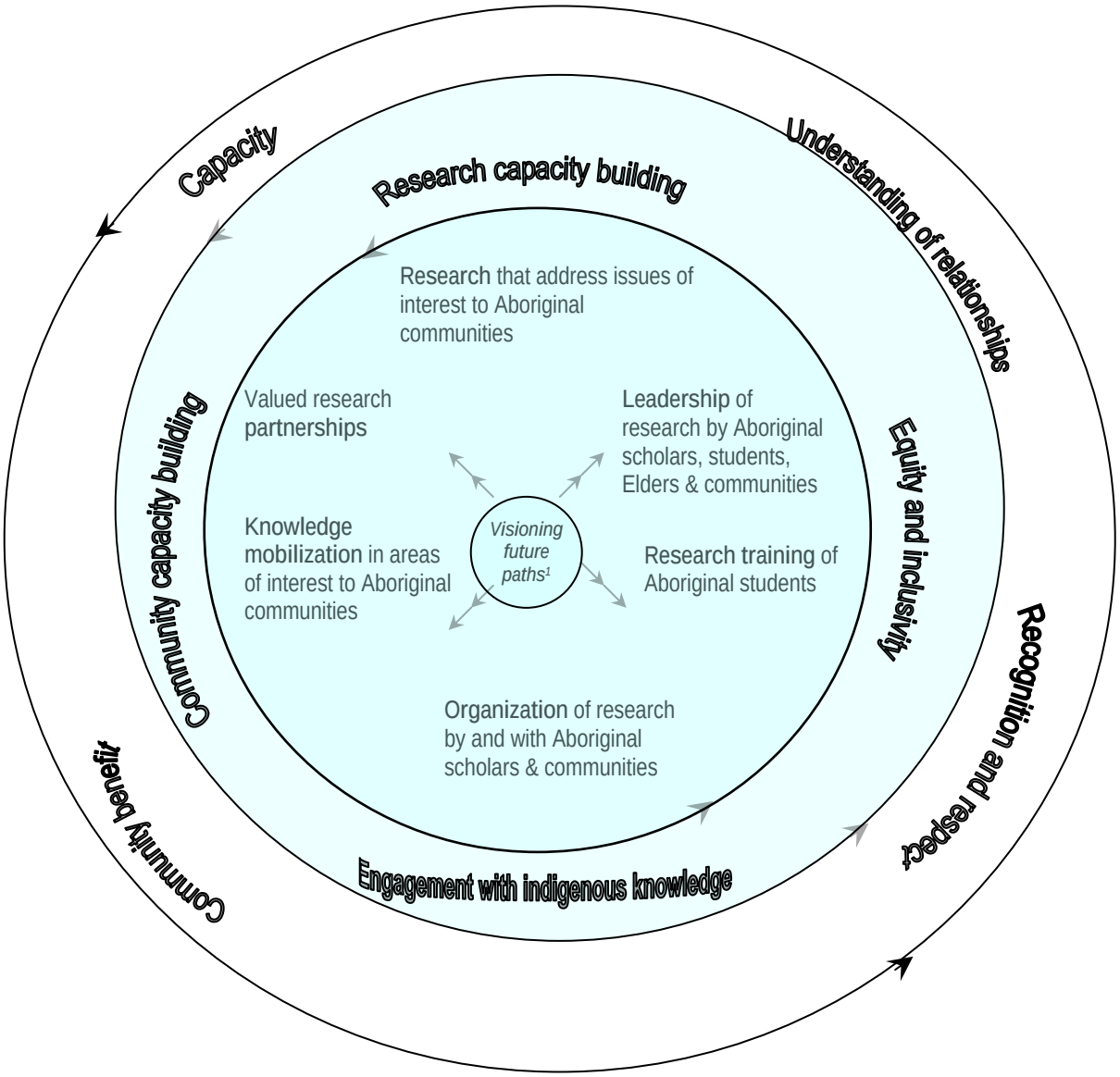


Figure 2: SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Program Logic Model - Circle Version



Focus of the evaluation

[1]Suggested by : Graveline, Fyre Jean (1998) *Circle Works: Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness*. Fernwood Publishing. "The Elders look back towards the youth and help them find a future that the Elders do not see." (Parker Palmer)

1.2.3 Program outputs: applications and funded projects

Table 1 summarizes the number of applications received and funded in the Aboriginal Research pilot program.

Table 1: Awards made under the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program, 2004, 2005 & 2007

Year	2004/05		2005/06		2007/2008		
	Development grants	Research grants	Development grants	Research grants	Development grants	Research grants	Total
No. of applications	39	87	18	51	18	47	260
No. of awards made	10	18	12	17	6	20	83
Success rate	23%		41%		40%		32%

A total of 260 applications were submitted in the three years of the program competitions, with a total of 83 grants awarded, for a total of $12.9 million. The overall success rate was 32%. There was a significant decline in the number of applications to the program after the first year, from 126 to 69 in 2005 and then 65 in 2007. The 260 applications were submitted by a total of 222 Principal Investigators (PI's). That is, 32 PI's (14.4%) submitted more than one application as PI's, across the three competition years.

Table 2 shows the detailed adjudication results for the Aboriginal Research pilot program. The overall success rate was lower in the first year of the program, with a relatively greater number of applications being recommended for funding but not funded. This table also shows that a higher proportion of applicants was unsuccessful at the relevance review stage in the second and third year of the competition (34% and 25%) as compared to the first, (17%), which combined with the drop in the total number of applications also contributed to a higher proportion of successful projects in the second and third competitions.

Table 2: Adjudication results

	2004	2005	2007	Total
Funded	28 (23%)	29 (41%)	26 (40%)	83 (32%)
Recommended but not funded	27 (22%)	6 (9%)	9 (14%)	42 (16%)
Not successful at relevance	21 (17%)	24 (34%)	16 (25%)	61 (23%)
Not recommended	48 (39%)	11 (16%)	14 (22%)	73 (28%)
Total	124	70	65	260

In total, 12 of the 33 (36%) recommended but not funded applicants in 2004 or 2005 (Category 4a) re-applied in a later year. Of these, five were successful (four in 2005 and one in 2007).

Table 3 show the number of institutions, investigators and partners involved in the applications, as well as the intended number of students to be involved. Although these numbers may have changed over the course of the grant, they can be seen as indicators of the extent of mobilization by the program of the Aboriginal research community.

Table 3: Characteristics of applications

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/2007	Total
Co applicants				
Mean/grant	1.8	2.2	1.6	1.8
Range	0 – 10	0 -12	0 – 5	0 – 12
Total	175	132	105	412
Collaborators				
Mean/grant	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.3
Range	0 - 21	0 -10	0 -10	0 – 21
Total	121	80	93	294
Partners				
Mean/grant	1.9	2.6	2.0	2.1
Range	0 – 14	0 – 12	0 – 9	0 – 14
Total	189	154	129	472
Students				
Mean/grant	4.1	3.9	3.8	4.0
Range	0 - 21	0 -17	0 – 24	0 – 24
Total	407	229	242	878

Table 4 shows a broad disciplinary breakdown of funded and all applications.

Table 4: Disciplines of funded and all applications[1]

	Funded applications No. (%)	Total applications No. (%)
Education	23 (29.5)	72 (28.0)
Anthropology	15 (19.2)	38 (14.8)
Linguistics	7 (9.0)	11 (4.3)
History	7 (9.0)	23 (8.9)
Urban and regional studies, Environmental studies	3 (3.8)	16 (6.2)
Psychology	3 (3.8)	10 (3.9)
Interdisciplinary studies	3 (3.8)	13 (5.1)
Folklore	2 (2.6)	4 (1.6)
Geography	2 (2.6)	8 (3.1)
Law	2 (2.5)	7 (2.7)
Social work	2 (2.6)	10 (3.9)
Sociology	2 (2.6)	17 (6.6)
Archeology	2 (2.6)	6 (2.3)
Library and information science	2 (2.6)	2 (.8)
Political science	1 (1.3)	4 (1.6)
Literature, modern languages	1 (1.3)	2 (.8)
Communications and media studies	1 (1.3)	4 (1.6)
Fine arts	--	1 (.4)
Criminology	--	1 (.4)
Economics	--	2 (.8)
Management, Business, Administrative studies	--	6 (2.3)
Not specified, Other, or Other council	--	3

[1]SSHRC's discipline codes do not include a classification for Indigenous or Native Studies.

As Table 4 shows, there was a concentration of applications in education and anthropology (43% of all applications), which is reflected in the distribution of funded applications (almost 50% of grants awarded). This suggests that there are currently more strengths in Aboriginal research in these areas than in other disciplines.

2. EVALUATION STRATEGY

2.1 Evaluation questions

Three main categories of evaluation questions were addressed in this evaluation: about program design and processes, about expected outputs and outcomes, and about program relevance. These questions cover the areas suggested for the evaluation of SSHRC Pilot Programs[14]. The specific evaluation questions were:

A. Program design and processes

A1. To what extent has the Development and Research Grants design been an effective mechanism for achieving the program's objectives?

A2. To what extent have the Relevance and Adjudication Committees been an effective mechanism for achieving the program's objectives?

A3. To what extent are the institutional and partnership arrangements required by the program appropriate?

B. Program outputs and outcomes

B1. What factors have determined program uptake?

B2. How well has the program succeeded in responding to the interests of Aboriginal communities? To what extent and how has the program begun to improve equity and inclusivity of support to Aboriginal research through improved flow of research benefits to Aboriginal communities?

B3. To what extent and how has the program begun to enhance capacity for Aboriginal research through supporting the development of more and better qualified personnel?

B4. To what extent and how has the program begun to enhance capacity for Aboriginal research through better organization and infrastructure?

B5. To what extent and how has the program begun to enhance capacity for Aboriginal research through wider and stronger recognition of its unique value and role?

[14] Conceptualizing Pilot Programs administered by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Corporate Performance, Evaluation and Audit (CPEA) Division, 25 May 2006

B6. To what extent and how has the program begun to improve equity and inclusivity of support to Aboriginal research with funded projects embracing cultural, regional, disciplinary diversity?

B7. To what extent and how has the program begun to enhance Aboriginal community capacity for research?

B8. To what extent and how has the program begun to enhance engagement with indigenous knowledge?

B9. To what extent is the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program en route toward achieving each of its stated objectives?

C. Program relevance

C1. What is the ongoing relevance of this program, and how has this evolved since the national dialogue was conducted in 2002[15]?

2.2 Data sources, collection and analysis procedures

2.2.1 Overall evaluation strategy

The overall evaluation design combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Primarily descriptive, it incorporated comparative elements where possible and relevant. With the intent of minimizing response burden on the research community and increasing response rates and sample representativity, very short, targeted survey tools were used to reach all program applicants and the broader research community with interest in Aboriginal research, with both quantitative and qualitative responses. Maximal use of existing administrative data also helped reduce response burden. The evaluation also called on the knowledge of people who were closely involved with actualizing the program's intents, including Relevance and Adjudication Committee members, many of whom had participated in the dialogue process leading up to the program, and SSHRC staff. At the same time, case studies of a sample of funded projects aimed to provide essential qualitative information about the extent to which and how the critical and unique program intents were being actualized in ongoing research operations, as well as in-depth explanatory description of key research processes. The methods used are described in more detail in the following sections.

2.2.2 Review of program documentation

Application files

A limited review was conducted of all 260 applications to the program, using a structured review template (Appendix 2). This review extracted two types of information about each project:

- The Aboriginal origins of principal investigators, co-applicants, and collaborators. We coded origins strictly, using three possible codes: Aboriginal, not clear or not stated, and non-Aboriginal. In addition, the number of Aboriginal students expected to be involved or hired was extracted.

[15] NB: the dialogue process began in 2002 and carried over into 2003.

- Focus of the research on First Nations, Métis, Inuit, non-status, or Aboriginal peoples in other countries.

SSHRC staff identified Aboriginal participation in funded projects through telephone calls to all 57 funded principal investigators from the first two competition years (i.e., not including non-funded applicants nor the 2007 competition). In order to gauge how accurately we were able to classify participants based on only the project application, we compared the results of the classification of Aboriginal participation made through SSHRC staff's direct question to investigators against that found in our file review, collapsing our "not clear or not stated" category into a single "non-Aboriginal" category (a conservative classification). The results of this inter-rater reliability exercise showed good agreement: overall, 89% of investigators were classified correctly by the file review. Misclassification was greater for Aboriginal investigators (20 out of 25 classified correctly) than non-Aboriginal investigators (29 out of 30 classified correctly). This will mean that the rates of Aboriginal participation in the program are likely slightly underestimated in the data presented in this report.

File review - institutional eligibility

A review was conducted of the program files pertaining to institutional eligibility, from all three program years. To be eligible to administer funds from SSHRC, organizations are required to meet a set of criteria (see section 3.1.3). As several of the funded organizations had not previously administered SSHRC grants, they were required to have SSHRC establish their institutional eligibility through review of their organizational policies and practices, for example related to ethics review, before funds could be released. These review processes became of interest to the evaluation once some challenges specific to the Aboriginal Research pilot program were identified through the database review.

2.2.3 Database analyses

Program applicants

SSHRC made available files containing the following variables for all applicants:
- Applicant name and unique SSHRC code
- Competition year
- Type of grant (Development or Research)
- Institution administering
- Discipline and area of research
- Length of grant
- Adjudication decision
- No. in research team
- No. of partners
- No. of students
- Budget applied for
- Amount awarded
- Partner names
- Partner contribution amount
- Partner contribution type.

These files were converted to SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), and merged with the results of the file review data extraction described above.

Applicants to other SSHRC programs

SSHRC extracted data from its files for applicants proposing research projects on topics related to Aboriginal peoples or communities to other SSHRC programs in 2004, 2005 and 2007. These were identified through a key word search of SSHRC using an algorithm where the first Area of Research named was Indigenous peoples, or the keyword field contained words connected to Indigenous peoples, based on a review of words actually contained in those fields (e.g., native, premie nation, first nation, innu, inuit, inuk, inutt, inuv, iroq, aborig, autocht, nunav, micmac, metis, clayoquot, sto;lo, land claim, mi_gmaq, indigen). All research programs were included. Prizes, fellowships and scholarships were excluded, as were institutional grants except for CURAs. Applicants who had applied both to the Aboriginal Research pilot program and other SSHRC programs (a total of 134 individuals in 2004, 2005, and 2007) were also excluded. The remaining total number of unique applicants was 437.

The variables extracted were:
- Applicant name and email address
- Program applied to
- Competition year
- Adjudication decision
- Budget applied for
- Amount awarded

This file was converted to SPSS for summarizing, and was used as the sampling frame for a survey of applicants to other SSHRC programs, described in section 3.2.5.

2.2.4 Telephone survey of successful and unsuccessful program applicants

Short, structured telephone interviews were conducted in English or French by two trained interviewers with a stratified random sample of applicants to the Aboriginal Research pilot program in the first two application years. With a target final sample size of 75, a sample of 132 applicants was drawn, stratified to include both Development and Research grants, and projects with and without Aboriginal principal investigators (as determined from the file review). Applicants who had accepted to participate in a case study were excluded, as were applicants who were also members of Relevance or Adjudication Committees. (Applicants who had been contacted for case studies were included, and all but one of these completed the survey). One person refused and one was on extended leave. One person completed the survey by email. Completed surveys were obtained for 81 applicants, for a response rate of 61%, a relatively high response rate for this type of survey. This represents 45% of all applicants in those two program years, and thus is unlikely to contain any significant bias.

The interviews ranged in duration from 10 to 25 minutes. The interview guide is found in Appendix 2.

Data from this survey were entered into SPSS for analysis, and merged with the information obtained from the file review and SSHRC database. Qualitative data were content-analyzed.

The breakdown of respondents to the survey is shown in the table below, with comparative data for the entire population of applicants. Overall, the sample is representative of the population.

Table 5: Sample characteristics: interviews with successful and unsuccessful program applicants

Characteristic	Obtained sample	All applicants (2004 and 2005)
Aboriginal PI	9 (11%)	25 (14%)
Aboriginal PI or co-applicant	29 (36%)	71 (40%)
Successful applicant	28 (35%)	56 (31%)
Type of grant applied for		
Development	22 (27%)	53 (30%)
Project	59 (73%)	126 (70%)
Year of award		
2004	54 (67%)	125 (70%)
2005	27 (33%)	54 (30%)
Institution size		
Small	8 (10%)	30 (17%)
Medium to large	72 (90%)	148 (83%)

2.2.5 E-mail survey of other program applicants

A very brief e-mail survey was conducted of all applicants proposing Aboriginal research projects to SSHRC programs other than the Aboriginal Research pilot program in 2004, 2005 and 2007, using the database described above. Duplicate applicants (individuals who had applied to more than one program and/or in more than one year) were eliminated so that each person would be surveyed only once. Duplicates were eliminated using decision rules that aimed to maximize the potential interest of the applicants in completing the survey: first, by choosing a successful application and, second, if there had been more than one successful application, by choosing a research project grant over conference grants or institutional grants associated with the individual. If more than one choice of successful or unsuccessful application remained, it was made randomly. There were a total of 437 unique individuals in the final database. Nine e-mail addresses were invalid, four respondents' automatic replies stated they had retired, changed positions or were on extended leave; and three people wrote back to say that their research did not concern Aboriginal peoples. This left a total eligible sample of 421. Of these, 274 surveys were returned of which 262 were complete, for a response rate of 65%. This is a relatively high level of response for this type of survey, especially from individuals who were not involved with the program being evaluated.

The survey questionnaire is found in Appendix 2. In addition, a number of additional responses, comments and questions were e-mailed or telephoned directly to the evaluation team. These were treated as additional comments made by respondents at the end of interviews or questionnaires, i.e., as unsolicited data, and are generally not reported here.

The table below compares the survey respondents to non-respondents in terms of three available variables: the success of their application, the program applied to (Standard Research Grants vs. all other programs), and the amount awarded (including teaching release). The sample appears to be representative of the population of applications to other SSHRC programs, at least according to these three variables. There appeared to be no systematic differences in the only other variable available for comparison: host institution type (with the vast majority of applications in both cases coming from larger universities).

Table 6: Sample characteristics: e-mail survey of other program applicants

Characteristic	Obtained sample	All applicants to other SSHRC programs
Successful application	137 (51%)	213 (49%)
Program applied to : Standard Research Grants	174 (67%)	283 (65%)
Amount awarded with release time (mean)	$85,123.89	$84,309.24

2.2.6 Case studies of Aboriginal Research Pilot Program funded projects

Eight case studies were conducted, five of Research Grants and three of Development grants. Only projects funded in the first two competitions were included, as the 2007 awards had only recently been made (and were not yet announced at start of the data collection). The choice of case studies aimed to maximize diversity across the following dimensions:

- First Nations, Métis, Inuit and non-status
- Aboriginal-led institutions (for example, band-managed community colleges) versus others
- Discipline: social sciences or humanities
- Projects involving Aboriginal principal investigators, projects involving Aboriginal co-investigators, and projects involving neither
- Based in a large, established universities, and in a smaller universities, colleges or non-academic institutions.

Within these categories, cases were selected randomly. The exception to random selection was inclusion of the two research teams based at Aboriginal-led colleges. The projects' participation in the case studies was initially solicited by SSHRC, and then followed up by the evaluation team. Nine other potential cases were contacted but either did not reply, did not accept, or had initial contact and did not follow up.

The final set of cases included seven focussed on First Nations and one on Métis. These peoples were based in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Québec and Newfoundland and Labrador. Two projects were in humanities (arts, literature) and six in social science or education disciplines. Three were housed by large universities, two by small universities, two by Aboriginal-led colleges, and one by a non-university organization. Principal investigators of five of the projects were Aboriginal, and three were non-Aboriginal.

Each case study involved visits to the location of the principal investigator. In some cases, this location was also the primary research site, but in others it was not. They included review of the project application, any available documentation and materials produced during the research, as well as qualitative interviews with those involved, including researchers, collaborators, community partners, Elders, students and representatives of the administering institutions, using semi-structured interview guides (Appendix 2). At least three and up to eight interviews were conducted per case; for a total of 29 interviews. The case studies aimed to compensate for the early timing of the evaluation – well before research outcomes can be expected to have occurred – by providing in-depth explanatory description of key research processes.

Each case study produced a case report that was sent to the principal investigator for validation. A cross case analysis was then conducted, to synthesize information related to the relevant evaluation questions and in particular for identification of conditions associated with the successful implementation of the program's vision of Aboriginal research.

The reports on the four case study projects who gave permission to be identified and their case reports published are found in Appendix 3. In the other cases, the case reports will remain confidential. Findings of other case studies are nonetheless integrated into the report.

2.2.7 Telephone focus groups with Relevance and Adjudication Committee members

Telephone focus groups supplemented by individual telephone interviews were conducted with members of the Relevance and Adjudication Committees from the three competitions. A total of 25 committee members were contacted by e-mail and invited to participate. Several were unavailable due to the scheduling of these sessions in the summer months, and a few did not reply. A total of 14 Committee members participated in four discussion groups or three individual interviews. The groups were mixed across committees and years, and several participants had been involved in more than one committee and/or year.

The focus groups and interviews were 60 minutes in duration. One member of the evaluation team facilitated the group sessions using a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix 2), and another took notes. Qualitative analyses were conducted from the interview notes.

2.2.8 Interviews with SSHRC program management and staff

SSHRC program management and staff participated in interviews, examining the program's design and adjudication processes, impacts of the program on SSHRC, and continuing relevance. Four interviews were conducted, three in person and one by phone, using the interview guide shown in Appendix 2. These were conducted last in the sequence of data collection.

2.2.9 Strengths and limitations

Strengths of the evaluation methodologies include its use of multiple information sources and perspectives on the program, to attain a balanced and comprehensive portrait of the program's implementation and process. The relatively high response rates for the surveys of applicants and non-applicants contribute to confidence that the views of the research community are adequately represented. While the case studies can be seen as reasonably representative of the diversity embodied in the program, a larger number of cases would have been desirable to more fully capture the range of peoples, issues, contexts and disciplines involved. The evaluation attempted to demonstrate cultural competency, first by developing the framework, questions and methodologies through a consultative process involving Aboriginal perspectives, and second by adopting some methods that would be more consistent with Aboriginal methodologies, for example, relatively open-ended interviewing in the case studies (although much was learned through the evaluation process about how this could have been strengthened).

A main limitation of the evaluation is due to its timing. The results of the final competition had not yet been released at the start of data collection, and Final Research Reports from the first year of competition (2004) are not expected before mid-2009. The evaluation explicitly did not focus on research production, in terms of publications, books, presentations or non-traditional outputs, but rather on the extent to which the program design and research processes were enabling the achievement of the programs' desired outcomes. No systematic conclusion can as yet be drawn about the program's effectiveness in terms of producing gains in knowledge or about knowledge mobilization.

2.3 Panel of Knowledge-Keepers

To ensure the evaluation's relevance and help inform the development of conclusions and recommendations that reflect the wisdom and knowledge of Aboriginal Elders and other traditional knowledge-keepers, a Panel of Knowledge-Keepers was convened to review the report and discuss its implications. The six Panel members were nominated by an arm's length Selection Board, composed of three representatives of Aboriginal research and organizations, based on criteria developed independently from SSHRC. The Panel met for a one-day, facilitated session in Ottawa on April 28, 2008. The Panel's discussion was documented and advice, comments, and interpretations have been used to inform the recommendations at the end of this report.

3. FINDINGS

In the following sections, the evaluation findings are organized and presented according to the evaluation issues identified in the evaluation framework. Each section integrates data from multiple evaluation sources. Main conclusions are presented at the end of each section.

3.1 Program design and processes

3.1.1 Effectiveness of the Development and Research Grants design

The Aboriginal Research Pilot program offered Development Grants and Research Grants with the intention that the Development Grants "support the development of research partnerships and detailed proposals for research grants, whether under this or other funding programs. The grants can be used to fund research workshops, research networks, community research consultations, and the development of research ideas and methodologies." [16] The evaluation examined the extent to which this intention was actualized in the program delivery and more generally whether this was an effective feature of the program design.

Data relevant to this question came from the Relevance and Adjudication Committee members, SSHRC program staff, the case studies and the database analyses. Overall, the Relevance and Adjudication Committee members and SSHRC program staff were of the view that the program design had been effective. The need to recognize the special nature of the research development process in the Aboriginal Research context was emphasized, especially to support the costs of face to face meetings. In this context, some committee members argued that the $25,000 ceiling on the Development Grants was not sufficient. In general, committee members noted that many of the development grant applicants had had no prior SSHRC funding, and agreed that the development grants had served the purpose of *"giving them a foothold into an academic application."* Data from the survey applicants tend to support this observation: three of the 18 applicants for Development Grants (14%) had previously submitted that proposal to SSHRC or another agency, compared to 11 of 59 Research Grants (19%). Moreover, data from one of the Development Grant case studies illustrates the importance in Aboriginal research of the open and flexible approach to research development, building from exploration and listening to the communities, without having to pre-define and impose external frameworks or methods – seen as truer to an Aboriginal approach

[16] http://web.archive.org/web/20041204225216/www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/aboriginal_e.asp

to developing knowledge: "*when you apply for years of funding, you're supposed to know how [and] where it will go. But how can you know this until you go and talk to the people?*"

Despite this support for the formative role of Development Grants, it was not clear that the Development Grants served as stepping stones to Research Grants, at least within the context of the Pilot Program. Of the 38 investigators who submitted grants in more than one year of the pilot program, only one submitted a Development Grant and then subsequently a Research Grant; whereas 18 of the 38 submitted consecutive Research Grants, three submitted consecutive Development Grants, and 10 submitted Research Grants followed by Development Grants. (We did not examine whether Development grants had been followed by submissions of research applications to other SSHRC programs).

An issue was raised through the focus groups and interviews as to the actual role of Development Grants, as it had played out in the pilot program, given the enormous range of disciplines represented in the applications – and their corresponding research needs. Within the category of smaller grants, the distinction between Development and Research grants was not necessarily clear, and some projects awarded as Development Grants were not necessarily only developmental: many of them were in fact small research projects or projects requiring lower budgets, some submitted by quite senior scholars. This is not seen negatively by some SSHRC staff, as it is consistent with practice in the existing Research Development Initiatives grants program[17], and may reflect the fact that some experienced applicants were in fact relatively new to the field of Aboriginal research as defined by the program. However, other SSHRC staff and some review committee members argued that Development Grants should be more clearly reserved for developmental work among new scholars. They were reacting to the fact that some very seasoned researchers with many successful Standard Research Grants behind them had applied for Development Grants in the Aboriginal Research pilot program in essentially the same area as their previous work. Data illustrating the multi-nature use of the Development Grant category come from the case studies of the three Development Grants. Of these, one was a continuation of a previous grant from another program with intent to explore next steps although not necessarily in research; one was essentially a small research project; and one was a developmental grant in the sense intended by the program, to develop the linkages and knowledge base necessary to produce a larger application. However, for all three development grants, the opportunity to present a smaller project – especially by the two less senior investigators who were tentative about their chances of success with a larger grant – was highly appreciated.

It was noted that the fact that Development Grants require as much effort in terms of paperwork as Research Grants and are subject to the same intensive two-stage review process may be a deterrent to some potential applicants. However, there was no strong support for the hypothesis that the grant size breakdown affected different disciplines inequitably. That is, none of the review committee members nor SSHRC staff felt that the program structure had been a disincentive to researchers in any disciplines.

Committee members observed that some grants they reviewed appeared to have be "topped up", i.e., had their scope enlarged so as to require the full budget available. In a few such cases, they had recommended that a Research Grant be re-cast as a Development Grant (which may account for some of the submissions of Research Grants followed by Development Grants in succeeding competition years). Committee members in one group noted that universities place great pressure on applicants to increase their grant size, and that this may have contributed to this inflationary tendency (present in all programs, but

[17] http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/rdi_e.asp

perhaps with particular consequences in the Aboriginal Research pilot program). They maintained that a stronger message could have been provided to applicants to encourage the submission of smaller projects, i.e., to dissuade applicants from designing projects up to the maximum available in a "one size fits all' program when a smaller scale for the project would have been more appropriate. It was also suggested that a mid-range category of grants – perhaps up to $100,000 over two years – might have been an effective alternative.

Conclusion: Effectiveness of the Development and Research Grants design. While overall the program design of Development Grants and Research Grants was effective in that many researchers found a fit for their work in one category or the other, the intent of the Development Grants was not fully realized. Further shaping of the eligibility criteria for this component of the program as well as encouragement to submit smaller grants within the Research Grants component might have helped ensure that grants in the Development Grants component were truly developmental and in particular providing support to the development of partnerships and protocols appropriate for Aboriginal research paradigms. However, the fact that Development grants require as much effort in terms of paperwork as Research Grants and are subject to the same intensive two-stage review process might have been a deterrent to some potential applicants.

3.1.2 Effectiveness of the two-stage review and adjudication process

Relevance and Adjudication Committee members and SSHRC program staff were asked about their views on the effectiveness of the two-stage process. Responses here were somewhat mixed, reflecting converging views about some aspects and diverging views on others. First, there was complete convergence about the importance of the review process including an examination of relevance from the perspective of Aboriginal communities, and that this process should be led mainly by people of Aboriginal origin. However, there was some divergence about how effectively the roles of the two committees were, and could be, separated. While most committee members felt that the two committees of their adjudication year effectively performed distinct and complementary roles, it was noted that some blurring sometimes occurred, where Relevance Committees found themselves discussing research merit, and Adjudication Committees found themselves re-questioning relevance. Effective chairmanship in all the committees seems to have corrected these slippages, but some committee members – not a majority -- suggested that it may be more efficient and equally effective to combine the committees and have a single committee deal with both relevance and merit, perhaps in two rounds of discussion. One group suggested that "*as this research area matures, there might not be a need for a Relevance Committee. There will be fewer applications".* Overall, however, there was continued endorsement for an examination of relevance and of the two-stage process, for example: *"I think the Relevance Committee is absolutely essential until scholars understand the importance of establishing meaningful relationships."*

SSHRC program staff noted two additional advantages of the two-step adjudication process from their perspective: first, it had allowed them to *"dispel a fallacy*" that had been held internally that it would be difficult to find enough Aboriginal scholars to achieve an appropriate Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal ratio on the review committee. In other words, the existing number of Aboriginal researchers was a bit of a surprise to SSHRC. Second, the two-step committee process allows more researchers to become engaged with SSHRC's peer review process, as a means of building its own organizational capacity for Aboriginal research.

Based on their adjudication experiences, committee members maintained that the committees' compositions had been able to adequately deal with the range of disciplinary diversity present in the applications.[18] There was unanimity that the discussions had been very effective. As one committee member stated: "*as a non-Aboriginal member of the committee, I felt it was a really considerate, genuine discussion, very respectful. It could not have been a better process."* There was little perceived advantage to the inclusion of external reviewers in the review process, especially among committee members.

Responses across all the focus groups and interviews with Relevance and Adjudication Committee members converged to support the claim that the relevance review process had been successful in screening in applications that were in line with the vision of Aboriginal research being promoted by the program, and screening out those that were not, especially those that were not grounded in Aboriginal community needs and interests.

Additional evidence about the effectiveness of the application process comes from the database analyses, showing how the program criteria were applied in the review process to result in differences between applications that were successful and those that were not. Table 7 shows some characteristics of successful and unsuccessful applications, including three indicators of the number of people involved. This shows the funded projects to be slightly larger and in particular, to have planned to engage significantly more students. The table also shows the proportion submitted by non-academic institutions (in this table, academic institutions include colleges and research institutes as well as universities).

Table 7: Characteristics of successful vs. unsuccessful applications

	Funded	Recommended but not funded	Non-funded
Average no. of investigators	4.35	3.42	3.95
Average no. of partners	2.46	2.21	2.16
Average number of students	5.65	2.58	3.63
Proportion submitted by non-academic organizations	5.3%	3.0%	9.6%

The Aboriginal Research pilot program sought to attract research conducted in partnerships involving university- or college-based scholars and participants from Aboriginal communities". Overall, there were on average 2.2 partners involved in each application, with a wide range from zero to 14 partners. The adjudication process seemed to favour applications with a higher number of partnerships: unsuccessful applications had on average 2.2 partners, while successful applications (including only those who received funds) had an average of 2.5 partners..

Table 8 confirms that projects with no partners were significantly less likely to be successful in adjudication ($p = .01$). It should be noted that the funding of projects with no partners does not necessarily mean that that these projects should have been considered ineligible, as the Relevance Committee took into account the nature of the investigator team. Aboriginal-led research teams and teams with Aboriginal co-applicants may not have involved partnerships over and above the affiliations of the investigators, and so did not list partnerships according to the definition provided by SSHRC in the application form.

[18] This issue had been raised in the Observers' Report for the 2004 competition: Report of the Observer of the Aboriginal Research Grants Competitions, December 6-9 2004, and Management responses to the Observer's Report, presented for information at the February 2005 meeting of the Standing Committee on Research Support and the March 2005 SSHRC Governing Council meeting.

Table 8: Presence of partnerships and adjudication success

	Zero partners	At least one partner
Unsuccessful	50 (86%)	86 (63%)
Successful	8 (14%)	51 (37%)

Of the 81 respondents to the applicants' survey, 43 provided a comment about their answer as to whether the fit of their research with the ways of doing Aboriginal research being promoted by the program had been a factor in their decision to apply. Breaking down these responses by applicants who were successful and those who were not, it seems that the negative decisions had surprised several researchers who had thought that their work was a good fit. Table 9 gives some sample comments, according to success category, to illustrate this. These data provide further support for the thesis that the program succeeded in supporting Aboriginal research of a nature distinct from that being conducted by mainstream researchers who were not necessarily aware of or trained in the different approach being promoted by the program.

Table 9: Example comments regarding application fit with ways of doing Aboriginal research being promoted by the program as a factor in decision to apply

Unsuccessful applicants
o *The feedback was negative because we had supposedly not forwarded letters of support from Aboriginal organizations within the strict time lime limits of the deadlines. [translation from French]*
o *Absolutely, I am very concerned about ethics and consulting the community.*
o *First Nations will be taken into consideration, as respect is very important. We want to fit their needs and desires; we do not want non-Aboriginals to determine what should be done.*
o *I do not know. I suppose so because it was about developing something based on the needs there.*
o *I thought it was a good fit (several respondents)*
o *I thought it was good, I was really disappointed with the feedback that says we should have a more community based approach, but it was not clear in the application that it had to be community based research.*
o *I didn't have a lot of expectations about this, because it's the door for minorities. You have to dilute what you want to be able to conform to the expectations of Aboriginal political leaders. One has to allow the intrusion of the political into the intellectual [translation from French]*
o *Not a perfect fit*
o *To train the people involved, this was a problem for our action research because it involves making the research accessible, using plain language. The people were not very open to research and the response time was catastrophic. [translation from French]*
o *This was probably our weakest part*
o *We put the proposal together very quickly, so I would say it was an Ok fit.*
Successful applicants
o *An interdisciplinary Aboriginal program fits us perfectly*
o *It's a key factor, we work hard to make the space for the way of doing research that fits with that of Aboriginal peoples [translation from French]*
o *It works very well, we erase our role, we are more facilitators than organizers, we discuss the agenda and the themes but the initiatives come from the Aboriginal community. [translation from French]*
o *Definitely, it was the first project that ever fit the mandate.*
o *It took some rethinking of this way but after working with Aboriginal people, the fit became good.*
o *It was important to work with participants based on a relationship*
o *I felt at ease in this program [translation from French]*
o *I fully respect the involvement of Aboriginal communities and refuse to do research where they are passive; I insist they have an active role. [translation from French]*

Feedback to researchers from the adjudication process

Post-adjudication feedback to researchers included a cover letter explaining what the committees had regarded as a successful application (identical for all applicants) and form providing individual feedback. This form contained checked responses to structured questions about: whether the proposal adequately engaged the program's objectives; whether strong research partnership agreements were in place or likely to emerge; and whether the applicant had taken care to identify and respect any relevant community research protocols; followed by a section with narrative comments. In the telephone interviews, program applicants were asked about the feedback they had received from the review process. Almost all had received feedback (a few were awaiting results from the final competition round at the time of the interview). These responses were quite mixed. Thirty-three (41%) respondents stated that the reviews were useful or helpful (even if their application was unsuccessful): for example: "*it had some very good critical suggestions and very useful feedback*"; *"Yes; it was useful, you always can disagree, but it was fair."; "Excellent; provocative, insightful, in terms of building relationships further in a positive spirit."* ; *"Yes; excellent feedback, handled by knowledgeable people in the area."*

However, 41 respondents (51%) made responses that were considered negative. Negative comments most often related to the brevity of the feedback and its lack of specificity, "*The feedback could have been more specific and comprehensive"; "I received no concrete suggestion from the committee. Usually, it should have been detailed. I was disappointed with the feedback, it does not help new researchers who try and spend time on proposals."* ; "*disappointing, not detailed feedback, not useful. It was rudimentary, was shallow, there was very little of it. It was the opposite of what I expected)*." The length of time before feedback was received was criticized by several respondents, especially among those who had wanted to re-submit and needed the time to be able to work with their partners on this: *"I received a form with checkmarks, and when I requested more comments for a revision, I was told that was the only feedback I was to have. I was really dissatisfied with it. …. We wanted to resubmit, but it took too much time to get the feedback, and without it, we were not able to get the community letters."*

The lack of detail in their reviews may have left researchers with ambiguous or incorrect messages about the intents of the program. In particular, it was not clear to some researchers whether their application was unsuccessful because they were not of Aboriginal origin: *"I had wanted more details. I got one page, a list of criteria on which we were evaluated. They liked the idea, but were asking if I was the right person to submit the project as a principal investigator. I don't know whether it was because I'm not Aboriginal, or because I don't have enough publications" [*translation from French]; *"I got the impression I did not get it because I am not Aboriginal, rather than because the proposal was poor. There were no substantive comments on the proposal*". "*I did not find the reasons plausible, I felt the decisions on which ones to fund were made according to identity issues, and that they had to find reasons for the others."* A few respondents also pointed out apparent inconsistencies between the application criteria and the adjudication checklists: *"So it was very tardy, uninformative feedback, not in line with the application criteria …..It was never stated the methodology had to be community based* "; "*the review was inadequate and not very helpful. The only thing clear was the insufficient use of graduate Aboriginal students, but this is impossible to get in small programs and our university almost does not have major PhD and Masters programs. The kind of university eligible was not clear in the application. Was this program only for big universities?"*

Some respondents compared the feedback unfavourably to that received in other SSHRC programs. "*No; not much, less details than standard grants, just an encouragement to resubmit, but no reasons why we did not get it."; "Some; I thought it was superficial, unprofessional, it embarrassed me in front of my colleagues. It was very poor feedback, 3 – 4 words compared to other feedback provided by other SSHRC's programs.*

It would be better to get no feedback at all than to get this insulting small and sketchy feedback. It makes me question the entire review process.".

Given the capacity-building aims of the program and the power of adjudication processes for shaping the range of the acceptable, this rate of dissatisfaction is disconcerting, even considering the natural disappointment that accompanies rejected applications. In their focus groups and interviews, members of the review committees were asked their views on the feedback provided, and although most were not really aware of the communication that had gone back to researchers, in one group a member who had been involved in all three years noted: "*the first year, we did not do much, and we boned up on it in the second and third year, we spent time going around the table getting positive feedback on all the proposals; we could do more of this and it would be invaluable to researchers*". It is also important to note that the feedback process, modelled on standard SSHRC practice, may not have been entirely adapted to the needs of the Aboriginal research community, in terms of the need to communicate feedback to community partners who had been mobilized around a project, and the timelines required for adapting or resubmitting unsuccessful projects when community arrangements and partnerships must be renegotiated. These issues were in fact raised by the 2004 Relevance Committee in their post-adjudication reflections on the review process.[19]

Conclusion: Effectiveness of the two-stage review and adjudication process. The two-stage review and adjudication process for the Aboriginal Research pilot program was a very effective tool in helping the program achieve its overall aims. Both the judgements of adjudicators and feedback from those adjudicated show that these processes were successful in selecting projects that were consistent with the vision of the program. However, the feedback processes to applicants could have been used more effectively to support the capacity-building aims of the program and the development of the field and been better adapted to the needs of Aboriginal research.

3.1.3 Appropriateness of institutional and partnership arrangements required by the program

Institutional eligibility

The Aboriginal Research pilot program offered to non-academic organizations or institutions the possibility of hosting grants. This aimed to increase the inclusiveness of the research program and to recognize the under-representation of Aboriginal scholars in post-secondary institutions. According to the application guidelines, all institutions and organizations that proposed to administer grants awarded under the program had to meet basic requirements for the management of SSHRC funds, specifically, that it:

- was a recognized legal entity in Canada;
- had a research mandate or research objectives;
- had the necessary accounting systems and financial controls in place;
- had a research ethics policy and a review process that is consistent with the guidelines set out in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS); and,

[19] SSHRC's Aboriginal Research program, Members' reflections on the Relevance Committee process, November 30, 2004. internal document.

- had a policy on integrity in research that is consistent with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Integrity in Research and Scholarship[20].

The eligible organizations could thus include Canadian postsecondary institutions (colleges and universities) and non-academic organizations including Aboriginal organizations and community organizations. Table 7, above; shows that only a small minority of projects was submitted by non-academic organizations, slightly fewer of which were funded than projects submitted from universities and colleges.

Moreover, attaining institutional eligibility proved to be a lengthy process for some of the successful projects. Review of the program files pertaining to institutional eligibility showed that in 2004, 14 applications that passed the relevance stage of review were submitted by community organizations or institutions that did not already have a Memorandum of Understanding in place with SSHRC, the main tool used to certify that institutions meet their institutional eligibility requirements. These organizations, as well as others who had made inquiries about the program, were all sent information on developing the Memoranda of Understanding. In response to the level of interest by Aboriginal organizations in the program and in anticipation of the issues this would raise, SSHRC put into place a working group to develop options for supporting the acquisition of eligibility and sought guidance from Governing Council on the issues[21]. Council responded by requesting strict interpretation of fiscal and ethical accountability issues, but suggested some flexibility, appropriate to individual situations, with respect to the other elements of eligibility[22]. A process was put into place for determining requirements that would be applied to each successful organization on a case by case basis, including internal and external review of institutional policies and review of ethics policies by the Secretariat in Research Ethics[23]. Five of these applications were subsequently successful in adjudication. Two were Aboriginal-led colleges, two were cultural centres, and one was a First Nations organization (determined upon legal consultation not to be a governance structure, but an association).

In working with these organizations to develop this aspect of organizational capacity for research, SSHRC's approach was generally to attempt to support the organization's attainment of the required conditions, and as a second option to propose that they use or establish a link with a nearby or affiliate organizations that already had institutional eligibility status. Agreements were reached with the two colleges on a provisional basis, in both cases with a provisional or project-specific approval of their status, including their research ethics policy (granted in both projects in December 2005, 12 months after the Notice of Award in January 2005). As the case study data showed, the colleges' views on these processes were mixed. In one case, work toward development of a permanent eligibility status still needs to go forward, so in that sense the organization finds the issue not entirely resolved and is concerned that this could affect future grant applications. Agreements were also reached with the cultural centres, one of which was among the case

[20] SSHRC, Institutional Eligibility to Administer Agency Funds, April 2004..

[21] Memorandum to Council, June 17 2004.

[22] E-mail summarizing Council discussion from Program Manager to Manager, Corporate Secretariat, June 21 2004.

[23] Reviews were conducted using the criteria outlined in the document "*Institutional Eligibility to Administer Agency Funds*", April 2004, which had separate criteria and required documentation for: universities; degree-granting postsecondary colleges in at least one of the social science or humanities disciplines; Non-degree granting post-secondary colleges that offer programs in at least one of the social science or humanities disciplines; not-for-profit organizations that are eligible in specific SSHRC programs (e.g., CURA, INE) and organizations that are eligible to receive and administer SSHRC funds for indirect research activities (e.g., publishers). This document states that provisional eligibility may be awarded under special circumstances. The *Federal Agencies Grant and Award Questionnaire* (a tool for assessing how grants and awards are handled by institutions) was also completed.

studies. In this case, although the openness of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program to having community-based organizations house research grants was applauded, negotiating satisfactory arrangements was "*exceptionally problematic*", due to some internal issues among the organizations involved. Some aspects of the project were put on hold for several months until an agreement was concluded in June 2005 (six months after the Notice of Award in January 2005). This involved having a university administer the funds, with a formal Memorandum of Agreement. In the second cultural center, the organization was awarded eligibility status on a project-specific basis. As for the First Nations group, a satisfactory agreement had still not been concluded by the summer of 2007, and the grant that had been awarded in 2004 had not yet begun. It seems likely that this organization will not be considered eligible to receive SSHRC funds. One similar case exists for the 2005 competition, which by April 2007 had not established institutional eligibility. This case concerns an Aboriginal educational institution.

More generally, there are some aspects of institutional arrangements required by the program that required SSHRC to forge new ground in terms of its own definitions and processes. Institutional eligibility is one aspect of this, but file review also suggested that the program was leading SSHRC to reflect on other questions as well, such as the definition of a researcher[24].

The delays in securing institutional eligibility resulted in redistribution of a small portion of the funds across fiscal years of the program, as well as in some of the top-ranked but unfunded projects receiving partial funding in the same fiscal year. In other words, program staff were able to ensure that funds not spent due to the delays in securing institutional eligibility for some projects could be used to fund Development Grant applications had received 4A ratings ('Unsuccessful, on supplementary list") .[25]

Partnership arrangements

The review criteria at the relevance examination stage required that applicants demonstrate that strong research partnership agreements, involving both Aboriginal and academic communities, were likely to emerge (in the case of development grants) or were in place. This feature of the program is regarded as absolutely critical by all of the Relevance and Adjudication Committee members who participated in focus groups and interviews as well as by SSHRC program staff.

Table 10 shows the types of partners involved in Aboriginal Research pilot program applications for all three competition years, counting each organization only once (some partners were named in more than one application, or in more than one year). This shows that the applications mobilized 396 different partner organizations, in a broad range of sectors. These most frequently were Aboriginal governance organizations, as was the intent of the program. Service delivery agencies and organizations, either in education or health and social services, made up another 27% of partners in the applications.

[24] E-mail correspondence from SSHRC President to its Executive Director, June 6 2004.

[25] E-mail memo from Program Manager to Director, Strategics: "Re: Aboriginal Research: unspent funds to be carried over to 05-06 & year-end 4A Development Grants", February 23 2005.

Table 10: Types of partners involved in applications to the Aboriginal Research pilot program

Type of partner	No. (% of all partners)
Aboriginal governance organization - association, nation, tribal council, territorial government	120 (30.4)
School, district, board, college, education council	54 (13.7)
Health or social services organization, any level	53 (13.4)
Cultural center or organization	39 (9.9)
University	30 (7.6)
Federal, provincial of municipal government or dept	28 (7.1)
Aboriginal association or interest group, non-governmental	19 (5.0)
Non-university research or other institute	13 (3.3)
Economic development organization, industry	10 (2.5)
Friendship centre or society	10 (2.5)
Professional association	5 (1.3)
Police	4 (1.0)
Elders' society	2 (0.5)
Other	4 (1.0)
Total number of unique partners	395

Additional data on perceived appropriateness of partnership requirements come from the survey of program applicants and case studies. Several applicants suggested that the eligibility criteria around formal Aboriginal partnerships should be relaxed: "*Some of the criteria, like getting a band to sign on, are a big challenge. There should be Aboriginal involvement, but maybe not a requirement that they sign up…; "I think reviewers give too much importance to the consent by community, which is long and hard to get. As Aboriginal leaders are politicians, they don't want to commit themselves".* While in some ways these views – considered at odds with the approach privileged by the program -- reinforce the Relevance Committees' insistence on these partnership arrangements as a high bar for access into this program, other responses suggested that this issue is more complex and requires flexibility. On one hand, it was noted that the formal partnership processes may be destructive of community mobilization for research: " *Yes, the support for community collaboration is very important, but the administrative rules should be adapted to the realities of some Aboriginal communities. We are asked to provide formal agreements, a formal commitment in advance …. But emotionally, its very hard to ask for because, even if they do want to collaborate, we create expectations by doing this, and if we don't get the grant, we create disappointment that runs the risk of damaging the collaboration. It should perhaps be possible to accept less formal agreements, to review the processes for accepting letters of intent … The community would then know if it was worth for them to invest in an application. Its destructive to force all this too quickly, and it could dissipate the energy uselessly.*" [translation from French]. The partnership arrangements required by the program also raised some complex issues related to community governance and an observation made by some investigators that in some cases, community political leadership may not be representative of all community voices, or

the most relevant source of support for all projects: "*Working with (a particular group) is politically delicate and it is hard to get the established council community on our side to show the community support SSHRC is asking for…. It would be good if the letters of support could come from others than the band council.*" This issue was also raised in one of the case studies, which had been working with a Community Oversight Committee conceived as a means to ensure diversity of points of view and a balance of power with the formal community governance in the research guidance process, recognizing that many Aboriginal communities are characterized by concentrated leaderships and dominant families. Overall, these data suggest a need for a high level of flexibility and sensitivity in interpretation of partnership arrangements, where implications at the community level may not be easily grasped by reviewers unfamiliar with the specific contexts.

Members of the Relevance Committees who participated in the focus groups and interviews noted that they felt they had seen cases where non-Aboriginal researchers had opportunistically developed a project and then tried to attach partnerships to it: *"professors who were looking for extra projects and someone Aboriginal – profs going fishing"* [translation from French]. This was inconsistent with the authentic partnership mode supported by the program. However, there is also evidence from the case studies and the applicants survey of the opportunism in the opposite direction: where Aboriginal communities or researchers developed a project and then attached a willing university researcher with the "right" credentials to the application: "*The partners heard of the grant and asked me to help in the last stages to put together the research proposal. I became part of the team as an advisor."; "The idea came from other people working in the Faculty of Native Studies. They were interested but did not have the publications and did not know how to apply to SSHRC's grants, so I was the PI."* In the case study where a group of Aboriginal scholars had approached a non-Aboriginal scholar, three team members had been working together for some time and had been reflecting on the research problem. They saw the Aboriginal Research pilot program as an opportunity to pursue their questions with external funding. They approached the Principal Investigator as a potential collaborator, based on his record. Their synergy as a team was immediately evident, and led to the successful application. The result has been highly positive for all concerned, and has led to an excellent, authentic collaboration with much mutual learning.

Conclusion: Appropriateness of institutional and partnership arrangements required by the program. Developing satisfactory institutional arrangements for some of the organizations (in particular Aboriginal-led colleges) that became involved in the Aboriginal Research pilot program presented challenges, requiring mutual adaptation on the part of SSHRC and the organizations. Although most cases were resolved, the need for negotiation and accommodation led to some delays in research start-up in projects awarded in the earlier program years. The program mobilized a large number of partners in a broad range of sectors, including many Aboriginal governance organizations. The partnership requirements of the program were effective in ensuring that research funded through the program was being conducted with and not on Aboriginal communities, but the data suggest that sensitivity and flexibility are needed in assessing how partnerships fit within the program.

3.2 Program outcomes

3.2.1 Factors contributing to program uptake

Applicants to the Aboriginal Research pilot program were asked to indicate what factors had been important in their decision to submit their work to the program. As Table 11 shows, several factors were

important in encouraging submissions to the program, including fit of the research with the program themes (98% of respondents) and the fit of the research with ways of doing Aboriginal research being promoted by the program (89%). Other factors also generally important to applicants were: the experience and qualifications of the applicant and co-applicants (83%); the duration of the grants (82%) and the expected involvement of Aboriginal students (82%). The perception that the program was targeting researchers of Aboriginal origin (71%) and the size of the grant (65%) were relatively less important factors in decisions to apply to this program.

Table 11: Factors in the decision to submit a proposal to the Aboriginal Research pilot program (survey of successful and unsuccessful applicants, n = 81)

Factor	No (%)
Fit of my research with the themes	79 (98%)
Fit of my research with the ways of doing Aboriginal research being promoted by the program	72 (89%)
The experience and qualifications of me and my co-applicants	67 (83%)
Expected involvement of Aboriginal students	66 (82%)
Duration of the grants offered	66 (82%)
Program was targeting researchers of Aboriginal origin	57 (71%)
Size of the grants offered	52 (65%)

Respondents to the survey of applicants to other SSHRC programs for Aboriginal-related research were asked a similar question about factors in their decision not to apply to the Aboriginal Research pilot program. The table below indicates the frequencies of reasons given for not applying to the Aboriginal Research pilot program. Almost one-third (29%) of respondents stated that they were not aware that the program existed. This may have implications for program uptake if the program is renewed. The three most prevalent reasons for not submitting the Aboriginal-related proposal to the Aboriginal Research pilot program were: fit of the research with the research themes (a factor for 44% of respondents); fit of the research with the ways of doing Aboriginal research being promoted by the program (a factor for 35% of respondents) and a perception that the program was targeting researchers of Aboriginal origin (a factor for 34% of non-applicants.). Taken together, these results suggest that the Aboriginal Research pilot program was successful in discouraging applications that were not in line with the vision of Aboriginal research it was promoting. It also may have discouraged applications from researchers who were not of Aboriginal origin (although we do not have information on Aboriginal status of these non-applicants). Expected involvement of Aboriginal students was a factor for 18% of respondents. Neither program design issues (size or duration of the grants: 10% and 8% of respondents respectively) nor the relative prestige of the programs available (5%) were frequently named as factors in not applying to the program.

Table 12: Factors in the decision NOT to submit a proposal to the Aboriginal Research pilot program (survey of applicants to other programs, n = 262)

Factor	No (%)
Fit of my research with the themes	115 (44%)
Fit of my research with the ways of doing Aboriginal research being promoted by the program	91 (35%)
Program was targeting researchers of Aboriginal origin	89 (34%)
Was not aware it existed	77 (29%)
Expected involvement of Aboriginal students	48 (18%)
The experience and qualifications of me and my co-applicants	40 (15%)
Was seeking workshop, not research grant, funding	25 (10%)

Size of the grants offered	27 (10%)
Duration of the grants offered	20 (8%)
Relative prestige of the programs available	14 (5%)

The Aboriginal Research pilot program attracted mainly new projects. Of the 81 applicants surveyed in telephone interviews, 63 (83%) had not previously submitted their project to another competition at SSHRC or elsewhere, whereas 14 applications had previously been submitted.

Applicants to the Aboriginal Research pilot program were also asked to indicate, in an open-ended question, why they had decided to submit their work to the Aboriginal Research pilot program. These responses were content-analyzed. The main reasons identified are summarized in Table 13, along with the frequency of occurrence. As the results in the above table would suggest, very often applicants had seen a fit between their work and the themes of the program. For some – 15 of the coded responses – the fit was more specifically with the orientations of the program, privileging Aboriginal research practices and engagement with indigenous knowledge. The reasons given also suggest that the program attracted some opportunistic applications, from researchers who were looking for new funding opportunities in general and felt that the program was worth trying.

Table 13: Reasons for submitting to the Aboriginal Research pilot program

Reasons	No.	Example responses
Seemed generally appropriate, given my areas of research	26	• *Because I was working on Aboriginal projects that needed to be funded, and because I was in the field of Aboriginal issues and working with Aboriginal students.* • *Because of the specificity of its themes, the program fit perfectly with one of my projects. [translation from French]* • *We though that program fit the concept.* • *I was working in that area and the program seemed to target Aboriginal XXX.* • *It is my primary area of research.* • *It was a new program, we had a new project on Aboriginal XXX so it was a good fit.* • *It felt appropriate.* • *I would have tried any program, but it suited the Aboriginal topics and modern expectations, so I thought it was a nice niche.*
A new opportunity for funding /to develop a new research area	15	• *My work is related to Aboriginal people because I work in a (), and we have issues concerning Aboriginal women. I thought it was wise to try.* • *I had applied before at the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and heard that funding was also available at SSHRC, so applied there as well.* • *I was teaching in (an area with many Aboriginal people). It felt relevant to me to apply my knowledge to the area of aboriginal XXX. I was starting off my academic career and I needed funding, and hoped this new program would be favourable to new researchers.* • *It seemed like a good opportunity to develop area of Aboriginal research I was interested in.* • *In thinking about Aboriginal peoples, I see that they are marginalized, and I wanted to understand this by looking at XXX, because if we can act, it's at this level [translation from French].*
Program respectful of Aboriginal research practices and indigenous knowledge	12	• *The discourse we are interested in resides in the space between two worldviews and from our perspective required adjudicators who both had the academic background and the experience of the phenomenon that we were wanting to investigate. … We had the expectation that we would be able to discuss issues from an Aboriginal perspective sui generic rather than something distorted through a non-aboriginal theoretical lens.* • *Because it was Aboriginal – I had been working with the community and developing relationships; I felt finally there was a program that would understand Aboriginal ways of knowing.*

		• *I liked the objective of the program because it allowed working in partnerships with Aboriginal people to advance the research. There is no other program with such a clear vision. I have 20 years of experience in partnerships: there has to be a local appropriation, and this program allows it. [translation from French]* • *Because I do work with Aboriginal Communities and the program was structured in a way to acknowledge the way of working with the community. It is designed in a way that is more sensitive to the needs of the community.* • *For Aboriginal people, one of the problems with research is that it is always done from a western perspective … this was the first time things seemed to progress…. It is a breakthrough in academia and it was due time.*
Had partnerships in place	9	• *We had a great three-way partnership in place and it was a great match with the program.* • *This project is designed by university and by Aboriginal community for the first time and that is why we applied to SSHRC.* • *Because I had everything for a National Aboriginal study, I already was in a SSHRC – funded project with many people, established partners and a pilot project to go.* • *I have very strong working relationships with Aboriginal communities.*
Source of funds to continue an existing project	5	• *In 1988, I had started a project with a group. And when that grant was finished it seemed to fit to pursue it. [translation from French]* • *The proposal was a direct descendant of a provincial program that was cancelled. When the funding was cut, the SSHRC's program provided a good opportunity to continue collecting data and, at the same time, redirect the project to better fit the needs of Aboriginals.*
Driven by community / Aboriginal colleague demand for it	5	• *It was driven by First Nations. I have a long history of working with them, and I had the university basis.* • *I was invited to the community and they spoke to me about the project. We did a small project together, and after that small project with them, I got funded by (another SSHRC program) When the Aboriginal grant program came out, we made it all into a nice large project with the community behind us encouraging us.*

One hundred and forty-three respondents to the survey of non-applicants (55%) provided other reasons or additional clarification for why they had not submitted their proposal to the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program. These were content-analyzed. The most frequent themes are shown in Table 14. Many respondents had interpreted that the focus of the programs was on Canadian Aboriginal peoples, excluding research related to indigenous peoples outside Canada. Further evidence that the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program succeeded in discouraging research not being conducted in a partnership mode is seen in the responses from 21 respondents, who recognized that their work did not fit this vision or who felt that it was a disincentive to their participation in the program.

Table 14: Clarification of reasons for NOT submitting an application to the Aboriginal Research pilot program

Reasons	No.	Example responses
Program appeared to exclude research related to non-Canadian peoples	22	• *I do aboriginal research outside of Canada, and assumed that priority would be placed on Canadian aboriginal issues.* • *I assumed that it was Canada focused because of the use of the term aboriginal. I didn't look further into the program based on the fact that I do research in ….* • *Canada was not included among my country case studies, and this program seems to require the sponsorship of some First Nation.* • *Definition of aboriginal seemed to be restricted geographically and culturally.*
Issues related to partnerships with	21	• *Challenges of liaison and logistics in getting an Aboriginal partner group* • *Its difficult to meet all the conditions, get all the agreements signed, in short, its a bit too*

Aboriginal communities		*complicated* [translation from French]. • *The time it would take to develop a research plan with community organizations was the major consideration. It is far easier to write a proposal after some consultation, and then see how to integrate community organizations' priorities into our research.* • *Research was with Aboriginal individuals as participants, it was not directly oriented to community relevance, and therefore was not easy to present to a community for involvement or support.* • *My understanding was/is that the Program expected researchers to work with communities, and my research is not structured that way.*
Reasons related to existing situation or commitments	13	• *Workload factors prevented exploration of this option.* • *The development of my work at the time was undergoing significant conceptual, methodological and strategic shifts.* • *I changed universities in July 2006…. and I have only recently begun to make new contacts with communities (in new setting).*
Aboriginal issues were only one part of the research being proposed	11	• *Aboriginal emphasis was only part of the project.* • *Part of my research was directly about Aboriginal communities but part of it was on a related topic but I thought it would not be direct enough a connection to garner funding under the program.*
The subject area was not seen as a good fit	8	• *I am a scholar in Aboriginal literature, a non-Aboriginal scholar, and did not think that literature (and the humanities generally) was enough of a priority for the Aboriginal Research Program.* • *My project is interdisciplinary and the aboriginal program would not have been the best fit.* • *My understanding was that this was a targeted program for researchers interested in pursuing its specific research themes. My research definitely overlaps with the program, but its goals are slightly different.*
Greater perceived chance of success in other programs	8	• *I had been successful in the past so re-submitted.* • *I had submitted an application for a () grant the previous year, had received excellent advice from the committee on how to improve my application, and since I followed their advice closely, I felt I had a good chance with (that program).* • *I had submitted the same project a year before to () and received 4A status, so I decided to resubmit to the same program, thinking I would have a better chance of getting funding that way.*
Timing of the submission	6	• *Timing of the call for proposals was a factor.* • *Deadlines at the time.*
Program appeared to target researchers of Aboriginal origin	5	• *Although I was partnering with Aboriginal researchers in …. the word on the research street was this grant was exclusively for Aboriginal researchers--and so the risk was great that a significant amount of time and energy could have been allocated to preparing a grant application for the program only to find that I was not eligible b/c I was not an Aboriginal scholar.* • *Politically, impression is that one should be Aboriginal to apply for the funding.*
Perceived bias in adjudication criteria or process	5	• *The makeup of the selection committee. It is well known that there is a very selective process of adjudication involved. Therefore no point.* • *My experiences with other submissions to the program showed me that the evaluation criteria aren't clear: they are based more on political correctness more than on the scientific value of the projects.* [translation from French] • *Apparent programmatic and ideological bias against the sort of research I had intended to propose.*

Alternatives considered and used

The Aboriginal Research pilot program was intended to complement, not replace, existing support for research on Aboriginal themes or issues offered through SSHRC's other programs. Indeed, over five times

as many SSHRC funds were expended on research related to Aboriginal peoples outside the pilot program during the three years of funding. Table 15 shows the application and awards made by SSHRC during the same funding years as the Aboriginal research pilot program. We estimate that approximately $32M in funding was awarded in these grants for research on Aboriginal themes or issues [26], compared to the $12.9M awarded through the Aboriginal Research pilot program.

Table 15: Applications and amounts awarded to other SSHRC programs in Aboriginal theme areas, 2004-2007

Program no.	Program name	No. of applications	No. of awards
410	Standard Research Grants	361	143
412	Major Collaborative Research Initiatives Program	5	1
502	INE Outreach Grants	6	5
504	Crossing Boundaries Research Initiative	3	1
603	Knowledge Impact in Society	4	0
646	Aid to Research Workshops and Conferences	60	36
820	Research Development Initiatives	19	6
827	Forest Research Partnerships Program	1	1
833	Community-University Research Alliances (CURA)	21	7
835	Relationships in Transition	1	0
848	Research/Creation Grants in Fine Arts	3	1
849	Image, Text, Sounds and Technology	3	1
851	Northern Research Development Program	62	31
853	Multiculturalism Issues in Canada	2	1
855	Homelessness and Diversity Issues in Canada	1	0
857	Strategic Research Clusters Design Grants	8	5
859	The Social Economy Suite	4	2
861	International Opportunities Fund	19	4
863	BOREAS	3	3
	Total	586	**248**

In the survey of applicants to the Aboriginal Research pilot program, 34 (42%) had considered submitting the project to another funding program before their Aboriginal Research pilot program submission, and 31 (38%) indeed resubmitted after their initial Aboriginal Research pilot program submission. The programs considered and submitted to include several offered by SSHRC, solely or in partnership – Standard Research Grants, Northern Research, Community-Universities Research Alliances (CURA), International Opportunities, and Networks Centres of Excellence (NCE). Programs offered by several other agencies were also mentioned as having been considered. These were: Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR) Institute for Aboriginal People's Health, an Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) program on food contamination; NRC's Canadian Forest Service Mountain Beetle Initiative; Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)[27], Canadian Council on Learning, provincial

[26] Note that this estimate is based only on the amounts associated with projects in the keyword search conducted to identify relevant non-applicants to the program and should be interpreted with extreme caution.

[27] "Under Part IX of the National Housing Act, the Government of Canada provides funds to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to conduct research into the social, economic and technical aspects of housing and related fields." http://www.cmhc-

organizations including the FQRSC; Aboriginal organizations such as Six Nations, Ontario Federation of Native Friendship Centres, National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO), Aboriginal Healing Foundation, and finally a municipal government fund. However, SSHRC's Standard Research Grants program was the most frequently cited alternative site of considered or actual submissions.

Of the 262 applicants to other SSHRC programs in areas related to Aboriginal research who responded to the survey, 89 (33%) had also considered submitting that proposal to the Aboriginal Research pilot program. Of these, 20 respondents (27%) were in anthropology or archaeology (i.e., the disciplines covered by the SRG Committee 16), while the others were spread out across a wide variety of disciplines. Twenty-one respondents (8%) indeed been had been co-applicants on other proposals submitted to the Aboriginal Research pilot program; of these, five were in anthropology. There thus appears to be some degree of perceived interchangeability among programs, especially in anthropology and archaeology.

Decline in applications and expected future uptake

The above data on reasons for applying and not applying to the program may help explain the drop in application numbers over the years of the program. Some of the researchers who applied in the early years of the program may have done so opportunistically and may have learned that their approach was less of a fit with the program than they had surmised. They thus may not have reapplied. This view is also supported by the focus group data when Relevance and Adjudication committee members were asked to discuss what factors may have accounted for this drop (e.g., "*The second and third years, as people may began to realize that the program was serious about its intentions, the calibre of the proposals increased. The last round, this year, there were some exceptional applications"*). Among those who had participated in more than one year's adjudication process, it was felt that that the initial year had attracted a larger number of applications than would be expected in the normal course of the program, in part because the program had been highly anticipated, in part because it attracted some researchers whose work did not fit the approach to Aboriginal research sought by the program, and in part because it stimulated new research activity by and with Aboriginal communities and scholars. These committee members also noted that the size of the Aboriginal research community is relatively small, which would mean that the program could saturate its first-cycle capacity more easily in the first few years (that is, successful applicants would be busy carrying out their funded projects and not as likely to apply in the years immediately after the award).

In addition, some very minor evidence from the survey of applicants suggests that negative rumors about the fairness or appropriateness of the program's adjudication process may have circulated in some circles, following unsuccessful applications: for example*: "As I have worked in the area for 30 years, I know that it was important that Aboriginals were on the evaluation committees, but to get a grant, it must be the Nation you are working with, because they are loyal to their Nation and that is why we did not get it, I think";* [appearing to believe that particular Aboriginal identities were favoured in the adjudication process]; *"SSHRC has a cult that they do not fund anyone who is not a well known researcher: they only want academic implications. That is why we were rejected, the only weak point was the research team, even if my research experience was stronger, it became identity politics and I have a problem with this. It seemed better to be Aboriginal and have no experience at all".*

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schl.gc.ca/en/corp/li/horetore/upload/CHIC_EN_Vol14(w).pdf. CMHC is responsible for on-reserve housing and funds some research

3.2.2 Response to the interests of and improved flow of benefits to Aboriginal communities

Data for this question came from the case studies, and are reported with the important reminder that none of the research projects is completely finished and the benefits to communities are still only partial or potential. Nonetheless, the case study data suggest that the potential for community benefit is central to the research endeavour and to the processes with which the research is being conducted. Table 16 summarizes the expected benefits to Aboriginal communities in each of the eight cases. These are extremely varied, ranging from the immediate to the long term, and differing emphasis on the theoretical and the pragmatic.

Table 16: Expected benefits to communities from case study projects

Case	Expected benefits
1	Respectful and useful dissemination of research results from a prior project on community strengths through a capacity-building pilot project
2	Helping to communicate the community's understanding of its collective cultural identity to outside entities, including government, on its own terms, in ways that will help support recognition of Métis status.
3	Defining a balance between experiential, inherited and sought knowledge that also bridges Aboriginal and western social science, in ways that can be used in youth and adult education.
4	Reframe and decolonize existing narratives of Canadian and Aboriginal history, through research, analysis, dialogue and demonstration that will impact artistic and media production as well as scholarly work
5	Determine community members' range of historical and contemporary values toward their land, particularly in areas that have implications for economic development and environmental policy, as a support to decision-making that will follow land claim settlement
6	Identification of supports and gaps in teacher education based on beginning teachers' experiences, contributing to articulating a more effective model of Aboriginal teacher education
7	Working to improve the quality of life for all by articulating the nature of aboriginal and non-aboriginal relations with the side benefit that the research process is also providing a positive space and forum for respectful cross-institutional and citizen discourse.
8	Preserving indigenous languages by using indigenous knowledge to find natural ways of teaching and translating these into effective methods for supporting adult language learners

Cross-case analysis suggested that the key notions embedded in this central program precept of "flow of benefits to communities" are being unravelled and expanded through the research process. For example, the notion of benefit was questioned in important ways, as it is not clear who defines benefit and what can constitute benefit. Although the underlying discourse of the Aboriginal Research pilot program seems often interpreted as oriented toward providing immediate and measurable benefit in terms of improving social conditions, some researchers see their work as contributing to much less tangible, but potentially much more fundamental community benefits, for example in terms of self-definition, personal and collective identity, or development of a space for a critical dialogue that can allow progress to decolonization of thinking and action. Similarly, the diversity of notions of community is also illustrated through these case studies. In five of the eight cases, "community" referred to an autonomous band or nation with a defined geographical or historical identity, sometimes without recognized status or recognized tribal lands. In one of these cases, this definition expanded during the course of the research, as the notion of community evolved beyond a purely geographic focus. In the cases of the two Aboriginal colleges, the notion of community was essentially coincident with the college: i.e., there was little separation between the institution and the community. In other case studies, "community" referred to a broad community of shared interests, without a specific cultural focus, or was centred around organizations that are located, physically or conceptually, within geographic, cultural and/or intellectual communities. In another case study, the

research was described as "*stepping in to the flowing river of the historic development of native education",* thus adding a chronological dimension to the notion of community.

Conclusion: Response to the interests of and improved flow of benefits to Aboriginal communities. The case study data show that the potential for community benefit is central to the research endeavour and to the processes with which the research is being conducted. In addition, the program is enabling exploration and elaboration of the notions of "community" and "benefit" embedded in this expected program outcome.

3.2.3 Enhanced capacity for Aboriginal research through more and better qualified personnel

Aboriginal involvement in the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program

One of the key indicators of program success is the level of engagement of Aboriginal scholars in applications to the program and its impact on their access to grant funds, which not only produce research results but also benefit careers. Table 17 shows the number and proportion of the 260 applications to the program that involved principal investigators of Aboriginal origin, Aboriginal co-applicants, collaborators and partners. Overall, 10% of principal applicants were of Aboriginal origin, with a higher proportion in the first two years of competition. Forty-one percent of applications had either Aboriginal applicants or co-applicants or both.

Table 17: Aboriginal principal investigators, co-applicants, collaborators and partners involved in applications

	2004	2005	2007	Total
Aboriginal Principal applicant	12 (12%)	8 (14%)	2 (3%)	22 (10%)
Aboriginal co-applicants	36 (36%)	19 (32%)	19 (29%)	74 (33%)
Aboriginal Principal or co applicants (combination of the above two lines)	45 (45%)	25 (42%)	21 (32%)	91 (41%)
Aboriginal collaborators	22 (22%)	24 (24%)	13 (20%)	49 (22%)
Aboriginal partners	49 (49%)	41 (70%)	39 (60%)	129 (58%)

The table below shows the level of involvement of people of Aboriginal origin in the projects that received funding through the program. Just over one-quarter (27%) of funded projects have Aboriginal principal investigators, compared to 10% of applicants. Projects with Aboriginal principal investigators were significantly more likely to be funded than those with non-Aboriginal principal investigators (88% vs. 27%, p = .001). However, a few projects with Aboriginal principal investigators were not successful. Close to 60% of funded projects have either an Aboriginal principal investigator or co-investigators. According to our file review, 94% of funded projects involve Aboriginal principal investigators, co-applicants, collaborators or partners. (Although the few projects that did not involve Aboriginal principal investigators, co-applicants, collaborators or partners should theoretically have been ineligible for funding readers are reminded that our reliability exercise suggested that these data may slightly under-represent Aboriginal participation in the program; and it is possible that a few projects may have close ties with Aboriginal communities in ways that were evident in the application but not captured in the categories).

Table 18: Aboriginal involvement in funded projects

	No (%)
Aboriginal Principal applicant	25 (31%)
Aboriginal co-applicants	26 (32%)
Aboriginal Principal or co applicants (combination of the above 2 lines)	39 (52%)
Aboriginal collaborators	13 (16%)
Aboriginal partners	44 (54%)
Aboriginal PI, co-applicants, collaborators or partners (combination of all of the above)	76 (94%)

Overall, these data demonstrate that there is indeed significant Aboriginal participation in the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program, and that scholars of Aboriginal origin were highly successful (but not automatically so), in accessing to grant funds through it. This suggests that the program fit the research interests and experience of Aboriginal scholars and may have begun to help improve equity and inclusivity of support to Aboriginal research through improved advancement of Aboriginal scholars' research careers.

Involvement of Aboriginal students

One of the program objectives was to provide research training opportunities for Aboriginal students. As Table 3 (pg. 10) shows, the project applications expected that a total of 878 students would be involved. File review attempted to identify the number of Aboriginal students expected to be involved. Although this was not always clear, according to the review of applications for 2004 and 2005, the projects intended to involve a total of 594 students of Aboriginal origin, with a mean per project of 3.5 Aboriginal students, and a range from none to 48. When only the funded projects are examined, these projects intended to involve a total of 262 students of Aboriginal origin. Funded projects planned to engage significantly more students (4.9 Aboriginal students per project) than did non-funded projects (2.8 Aboriginal students per project) ($p = .03$).

As mentioned above, SSHRC staff identified Aboriginal participation in funded projects through telephone calls to all 57 funded principal investigators from the first two competition years (i.e., not including non-funded applicants nor the 2007 competition). According to this source, which represents actual as opposed to intended participation, a total of 473 Aboriginal students were involved in 53 funded projects[28], with a range from no Aboriginal students to 60 Aboriginal students across the projects, and a mean of 10.3 Aboriginal students per project. Although this is far more than the 262 expected from the applications, we note that some of these data are at odds with information gathered through the case studies, and that there appear to have been differing interpretations of student involvement from our file review coding, which was based in part on expected payments of stipends to students. In any case, it can be said that the projects from the first two competition years appear to be engaging, in various roles, a significant number of students.

Enhanced capacity through experiences gained

Data from the case studies illustrate ways in which experiences are being gained by Aboriginal participants that would not have been gained otherwise. In one case, a community member successfully petitioned the Council that research be conducted to help the community with a particular issue. This person then sought

[28] Information was not available on all 57 funded projects, and two whose institutional eligibility had not been determined were excluded.

out an academic supervisor, enrolled in a Masters program, and with the supervisor as Principal Applicant, submitted the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program proposal to be able to carry this out, with full support of the community throughout. The project is thus essentially the Master's thesis of the community member-become-student investigator. The grant is allowing him to take leave of a full-time position in another province and concentrate on the research, under the mentorship of his research supervisor. It was clear from the interviews that the student researcher would not have entered the Master's program in order to be able to submit a research grant had the Program, with its special encouragement of community-centred research, not existed.

A second case shows other ways in which Aboriginal researchers are gaining experiences that they would not have had otherwise. In this case, they recounted having gained more ability to navigate between the real world of family and community life with its own values and approaches, and the academic world, which operates with a rather different set of values. At one level, this is involving familiarizing the less-experienced members of the research group with university research process, mentoring them into the insiders' circle: *"it lets us be who we are culturally, but guides us through the maze of academia; we are learning to negotiate our cultural identity in an academic environment".* At another level, this experience has surfaced many areas of tension and conflict between the two worlds. All these investigators see the research endeavour as an opportunity to develop a practice that can resolve these lived tensions in positive ways, at both a community level: e.g., "*making changes that are better for the university and are better for my people";* and an individual level: *"we're required to learn to fit, but we need to maintain a sense of self while being respectful of academic ways".*

In a third case, the research process has developed capacity by developing a stronger critical sense among the community researchers involved: they have learned how to critically appraise methodologies from their Nation's perspective, and to question the absence of culturally appropriate methodologies from existing research texts, teachings, and practice – including some of the practices with which they had been involved. This critical capacity development was also reflected in another case, where some profound questioning of conventional social science method was occurring as the Aboriginal investigators confronted what they had been taught in their graduate methods classes and their understanding of how knowledge is and ought to be gained, and then shared their consternation among the research team: "*I find some things about research methods are so odd. For example, asking for an answer to your own question - even in terms of having a conversation, this is <u>not</u> how we have a conversation".*

Development of Aboriginal researchers' capacity to access the mainstream is also part of the program's impacts. This is seen in the case recounted above, where community researchers acknowledged being introduced to, and negotiating with, the academic world. In one case, a recently graduated doctoral student involved with the research project has gone on to a university position. Another case illustrates another aspect, in terms of the grantsmanship required for accessing the program. The research team described their experiences in *"getting the problem respected"* by SSHRC, and proposing a research program that would be sufficiently palatable to the review committee – *"not regarded as a fishing expedition by a review committee"*. It had been a challenge to frame the project in a way that was sufficiently respectful of all the knowledge traditions involved and that could at the same time would be considered a "dialogue between research traditions" as the program documentation required.

Cross-case analysis also revealed that the program is helping to strengthen the capacity of non-Aboriginal scholars in the mode of Aboriginal research that the program aims to support. This capacity development was noted by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers. In one case, Aboriginal community

researchers stated: "*the researchers have to have both the qualifications of the institutions and the acknowledgement of (our) way of living. Non-Aboriginal researchers can be engaged in it, but they have a lot to learn".* Echoing this in another case, non-Aboriginal research team members felt that they had the most to learn from their colleagues, and indeed that they were learning a great deal --- rethinking their ideas about mainstream research process, and developing new and *"more honouring*" ways of working with people. Some poignant evidence about this impact of the research process came from a non-Aboriginal researcher with a long history of successful engagement with Aboriginal communities who shared some of her critical reflections on the role of non-Aboriginal scholars in Aboriginal research, specifically the tension between the traditional academic requirement of having total control over the research process, and the requirement of authentic Aboriginal partnership that there be no question of control. Despite the success of the relationship with the community in the Pilot Program project, her distance from the community has also been a struggle to come to terms with: *"I learned from this that we are not community people. Even if you have good "community client" skills, you are not in the same location, not in the same relationship, as the people in that community. Its hard to find your space, and it feels very lonely".*

And, in one case, there was some evidence that the program is helping to shape the capacity of Aboriginal scholars in the mode of Aboriginal research that the program aims to support. Here, the investigator recounted that conducting the work had given cause for reflection about her legitimacy in doing this work for and with the community – whether the fact of being from that community is on it own sufficient legitimacy to conduct research within that community. She noted that this reflection made her more conscious of the need for consulting extensively within the community as part of the process, to further her understanding of the community of which she is a member.

Enhanced research capacity of personnel was also noted in terms of increasing links across disciplines and breaking down disciplinary silos. In one case, the principal investigator – whose work is very unusual for the department in which she is located -- has been collaborating on works with colleagues in two other departments. It is expected that the work funded through Aboriginal Research Pilot Program will become part of this ongoing multidisciplinary stream of reflection and analysis.

Community engagement in the research process creates additional pressure for the researchers, especially for those who are from the communities with which they are engaged. One student researcher saw this as the challenge of "*being in the mix too":* studying western scientific method, doing university based research, and needing to respond to the community need underlying the project. In another case, the research team described the strong pressures it feels to meet community expectations: *"it creates a higher level of anxiety. It's one thing when a scholar is distant – it's more personal when it's your own community."*

Students' perspectives

It is difficult to separate students' perspectives in the analysis of the case studies, as Aboriginal students of various levels and backgrounds are involved in all of the projects studied. Their roles are generally those of collaborators, and there is rarely if ever in these projects a separation between learner and teacher – all involved tend to see themselves as learners, and the role of gathering knowledge is highly valued (see section 3.2.8). However, we point to one situation found in a case study, where the program had an important benefit to a doctoral student in an isolated and vulnerable position, in an academic environment without any expertise in Aboriginal research or knowledge traditions, on a campus without even an Aboriginal Students' Association, wanting to work at a multilevel interface between arts, technology and Aboriginal culture. The project has allowed her to pursue the intellectually fulfilling work she had been

seeking in her doctorate, but in parallel to her PhD program, because the Aboriginal research work – based on collective knowledge – was not judged to be an acceptable doctoral contribution. She stated, and emphasized: "*if it weren't for the (project), I would not still be doing a doctorate".* In other cases and as described above in this section, Aboriginal students involved in the projects were clearly developing capacity to conduct Aboriginal research, sometimes being confronted with incompatibilities among world-views and paradigms.

Conclusion: Enhanced capacity for Aboriginal research through more and better qualified personnel. The Aboriginal Research Pilot Program is characterized by significant Aboriginal participation. Scholars of Aboriginal origin were highly successful in obtaining grants, and the projects intended to involve large numbers of Aboriginal students. The evaluation data on the research processes to date suggest that capacity is being built among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars and students for Aboriginal research in the mode of Aboriginal research that the program aims to support, as well as furthering capacity to address and negotiate the differences between mainstream and Aboriginal research. Enhanced research capacity of personnel was also noted in terms of increasing links across disciplines and breaking down disciplinary silos, strengthening a multidisciplinary stream of reflection and analysis.

3.2.4 Enhanced capacity for Aboriginal research through better organization and infrastructure

The impact of the Aboriginal Research Pilot program on organization and infrastructures can be assessed indirectly through the case study data, applicant interviews, file review, and interviews with program staff. For the large universities involved in hosting grants, there seems to have been little appreciable difference between this and other SSHRC grants in terms of impacts on organization and infrastructure. The case study and applicant interviewees did not mention any particular issues associated with this program versus other SSHRC programs, other than the fact the some university research offices did not appear to be aware of its existence. There were no institutional eligibility issues arising with larger institutions. For smaller universities, however, some changes in organizational perception were noted that may have structural impacts on support for Aboriginal research in the future. In one case study, obtaining the grant raised the profile of the team's department within the university. This has countered some of the institutional racism that participants have experienced, where "*faculty outside the program saw us as not at the same level …. This gives our colleagues a different perspective on us, moving into the academic mainstream".* Similarly, in another case at a smaller university, the receipt of the grant was seen as having raised the legitimacy of this area of scholarship, and has furthered the acceptance of this Aboriginal research strand within the institution. However, it was noted in case studies conducted in smaller universities or organizations that their researchers often lack supportive infrastructures to help develop grant proposals and to publish, while at the same time are coping with heavy administrative and undergraduate teaching demands. The potential for the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program to enhance their capacity thus faces limitations, despite its greater accessibility and flexibility.

For the few non-university organizations that are housing grants awarded through the program, including the two Aboriginal colleges, data already presented in section 3.1.3 (pg. 24) suggest that having to negotiate and attain institutional eligibility may have had some impacts on their capacity. These organizations were either required to submit their institutional policies and have them analyzed by SSHRC and its consultants to assess their coherence with SSHRC criteria, or to develop or formalize policies that

would be coherent. This included: a statement of research mandate, audited financial statements; research ethics policy, and research integrity policy. In the case studies where this occurred, passing this step took time and energy, and it is not yet clear whether it will have enhanced capacity in future applications, should they occur.

With respect to research ethics policies, SSHRC in collaboration with the Panel and Secretariat on Research Ethics examined the overall coherence between the non-university organizations' policies and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This contributed to ongoing discussions of the Panel and Secretariat about the development of a section of the Tri-Council Policy Statement on research with Aboriginal communities.

In addition to the organizations who were funded under the program, several others requested and/or were sent information on institutional eligibility, and the file review showed that SSHRC staff provided support and encouragement to these organizations in order to facilitate their application to the program. This can be seen as increasing the potential for these organizations to become engaged in research, i.e., as potentially contributing eventually to enhanced infrastructure for Aboriginal research. These have included: Nations, Tribal Councils and foundations associated with them, chiefs' associations, cultural centres, Aboriginal-governed colleges, service delivery and planning organizations and research networks.

A very important element of enhanced capacity for Aboriginal research through better organization and infrastructure is seen in terms of the program's impacts on SSHRC's capacity as an organization to mount and manage the infrastructure necessary to support the vision of Aboriginal research that came out of the initial engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders. This enhanced capacity is especially apparent in the relevance review and adjudication processes, which, as shown above, were generally highly successful. It is also seen in terms of SSHRC's now enhanced capacity to support research that is not university-based (although some of this capacity is developing in parallel through other SSHRC programs, notably CURAs).

3.2.5 Enhanced capacity for Aboriginal research through wider and stronger recognition of its unique value and role

A corollary of changed organizational perceptions and greater visibility of Aboriginal research is greater recognition of its unique value and role, and in those smaller non-Aboriginal institutions where research capacity in general and Aboriginal capacity in particular are less strong, the program may have contributed to such an effect. However, there is not as yet strong evidence that this recognition is more generalized. Although SSHRC staff and relevance and adjudication committee members maintained that some progress had been made in this area, in general it was felt that it was not yet very perceptible in mainstream institutions.

Even within SSHRC, those interviewed (especially those respondents less directly connected to the program) felt that the program had had less overall impact to date than might have been hoped in terms of recognizing or valuing Aboriginal research within the organization. As mentioned in Section 1.1, the original document that gave rise to the program had called for several organizational actions in addition to the granting program; these included creation of an Aboriginal research careers program (scholarships), Aboriginal participation in peer committees and external assessments, work on identifying and establishing community research protocols, creation of a web-based network for Aboriginal research, and

representation of Aboriginal peoples among SSHRC staff[29]. Interviewees noted that none of these other measures have moved forward.

Recognition through teaching

Case study data showed that the knowledge generated through the funded projects and activities that accompany them are already being integrated into teaching and curricula at graduate and postgraduate levels. This is seen as having important long-term benefits in terms of sensitization and skills development, for both conducting and using Aboriginal research. In one case study, situated in an institution and program where half of the students are of Aboriginal origin, this research process is seen as having particular benefit in teaching: "*We are trying to design a curriculum that meets the needs of our Aboriginal students, and our depth of understanding has been greatly influenced".* This has been especially helpful with respect to research methodology courses: "*the courses that I teach have been totally enriched".* The introduction of the knowledge gained through the research process has also contributed to more open dialogue among all students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, about issues facing their communities. In a second case, the linkage between the project and an undergraduate First Nations Studies Program facilitates the involvement of students through their requirement to do a major fourth-year project, especially since that program has a community-based research focus with an emphasis on developing critical cross-cultural thinking skills. This is resulting in increased capacity of students to work in thoughtful ways in various Aboriginal contexts. In another case, learning acquired through the research is being made accessible in educational resources for high school students, as well as being taught in courses at the college where the case project is located.

Conclusion: Enhanced capacity for Aboriginal research through better organization and infrastructure and wider and stronger recognition of its unique value and role. Positive impacts of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program on enhanced capacity for Aboriginal research through better organization and infrastructure were seen mainly in two places: a) in smaller institutions and non-university organizations, particularly those that had not before received SSHRC funding and perhaps among some that may eventually apply; and b) within SSHRC itself, although some proposed organizational actions were not implemented. Integration of knowledge generated through the program into teaching and curricula is helping to increase awareness and capacity for Aboriginal research.

3.2.6 Equity and inclusivity of support to Aboriginal research

Relevance and Adjudication Committee members and SSHRC program staff were asked to give their assessment of the program uptake, and whether, based on their knowledge of the Aboriginal research community, it was in line with their expectations. In general, both SSHRC and the reviewers were pleased with the program uptake and felt that there were no major gaps in applications across Aboriginal groups and regions of the country. However, some reviewers felt that applications focussing on Métis and Québec aboriginal groups were underrepresented.

Table 19 shows data from the application file review on the types of Aboriginal peoples that were the applicants' focus. The vast majority of applicants (88%) focussed on First Nations, with less than five percent on any other group. (By way of comparison, according to the 2001 census, First Nations peoples

[29] http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/background/aboriginal_backgrounder_e.pdf

make up 62% of the Canadian Aboriginal population, Métis people make up 30%, and about 5% are Inuit.[30].)

Table 19: Type of Aboriginal people that projects pertained to (n = 225 applicants)

	No.(%)
First Nation	197 (88%)
Inuit	12 (5%)
Métis	6 (3%)
More than one type, or Aboriginal peoples generally	5 (2%)
Non-status	3 (1%)
Other country	1 (--)

Table 20 shows the regional breakdown, according to principal applicants' primary location (counting each applicant only once). Applications and funded projects were quite evenly divided among western and central regions of Canada, but with perhaps under-representation from eastern Canada. Note however, that the applicants' location is not necessarily that of the research work. For example, in two of the case studies, the principal investigator was located at an institution at least three provinces away.

Table 20: Regional distribution of applications and funded projects

	Funded projects	All applications
Ontario	21 (28%)	65 (29%)
Prairies (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba)	17 (22%)	50 (22%)
British Columbia	14 (18%)	56 (25%)
Québec	18 (24%)	31 (14%)
Atlantic	6 (8%)	21 (9%)
Northern (territorial)	0	2 (1%)

The program documentation encouraged submissions in three areas of interest: 1) international comparative studies; 2) new approaches and methods of inquiry that will build understanding of the dynamics and significance of Aboriginal knowledge; and 3) effective mobilization of knowledge within Aboriginal and other communities. As will be seen in section 3.2.8 (Enhanced engagement with indigenous knowledge) the second of these is clearly the interest area that will see most gains. The third, knowledge mobilization, is also a very strong thread through the entire program, given the nature of partnerships involved and the commitment of funded scholars to working closely with their various communities. However, the first was not addressed. It is not clear to the evaluators how this came about or how it was communicated to the research community; one respondent to the applicants survey noted: "'*international' was not in the [relevance committee feedback] checklist, I thought it would be valued but it was not even mentioned",* but a sizeable proportion of non-program applicants surveyed had chosen not to submit to the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program because their work focussed on Aboriginal people outside of Canada (Table 14).

[30] http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Analytic/companion/abor/tables/total/abgroup.cfm

Conclusion: Equity and inclusivity of support to Aboriginal research. The program included research in most regions of the country, reflecting the overall distribution of research capacity in the humanities and social sciences. Although the program focus and the composition of the Relevance and Adjudication Committees included all three groups, most research applications were focussed on First Nations communities with relatively fewer on Métis and Inuit peoples. The areas of interest most supported by the program were 'new approaches and methods of inquiry that will build understanding of the dynamics and significance of Aboriginal knowledge" and "effective mobilization of knowledge within Aboriginal and other communities"; however no research involving "international comparative studies" was funded.

3.2.7 Enhanced Aboriginal community capacity for research

Data about this question came from the case studies, and it is important to note that the limited number of interviews many not have captured all the ways the research being conducted is aligning with community capacity for research. As mentioned above, the funded projects are also working with a diverse set of understandings of the notion of "community", and are often responding to the needs and interests of several intersecting communities.

A first important finding, however, is that in many of the case studies, the community's capacity for research was already thriving, and the program presented an opportunity to enhance it further. These were cases where the research question originated within the community and was driven by them. In one such case, for example, this program has mainly intensified the opportunities for the scholars involved to concentrate on research activities. They felt that although the work would have proceeded without the grant, its presence has enabled the group to engage in more intensive learning. In another case, Elders interviewed indicated that it is a matter almost of principle that the community endorse and support initiatives that are indicative of younger people's engagement with the community and its development.
A key path to enhanced community capacity for Aboriginal research will be through the appropriation of research results as part of community-held knowledge. This was seen by community members as empowering. In once case, Elders stated: "*it also empowers us as a people, the recognition from outside that we have capacities, see our successes. Because everything about us is usually negative, often very negative".* In another case, the community researchers stated that their entire research process -- engaging community members and their communities in the research and then sharing the results – is seen as *"sending a message of respect and empowerment,"* which helps to develop and strengthen relationships within those communities and with the university.

Another interesting element of community capacity enhancement was seen in one case where some tensions were being acknowledged about the positions of power and privilege within academia, whether Aboriginal or not, occupy in relation to community researchers, and where a more equal balance was being sought. A university-based co-investigator noted that on one hand, although Aboriginal academics are not "*overwhelmingly enfranchised in our institutions*", they are in some ways "*part of the forces of oppression"* to those outside. This project was aiming to make clear that key Aboriginal intellectual resources are not necessarily located in the academy, and need to be sought and engaged with their respective communities.

A key way in which the program is contributing to Aboriginal community capacity is by overcoming disrespectful research practices sometimes experienced by Aboriginal communities where non-Aboriginal scholars have come into the communities, engaged community members in their research for a period, and

then left never to be heard from again. For the communities, their engagement means that the work will have an ongoing relationship with them and will *"add meaning to their lives".* It is striking how much responsibility the researchers in the case studies have assumed for ensuring that they can demonstrate that research can be done properly, respectfully and with benefit for the communities. For example, in one case, the research team pointed out that while many Aboriginal communities have little respect for or a lot of scepticism about university-based research, they see this project as "*an opportunity to make things different, for making lives better, for capacity building and empowerment".* In another case, the student researcher described the initial scepticism he had faced in parts of the community and how he had worked to dispel this.

Another important contribution to community capacity development enabled through one of the case study projects was the opportunity it created for First Nations community members to develop relationships with other First Nations communities. For some of those involved, this was the first time that they had visited another First Nations community – underscoring that while there are many relationships between communities at political and leadership levels, they are rarer among community members not involved in community governance: "*they were able to talk to other indigenous researchers, talk about their satisfactions, and sharing challenges.".* For the community members, it offered a unique opportunity to see, from their interactions, how other communities see them – a contribution to the sense of positive identity being developed through the research process.

Conclusion: Enhanced Aboriginal community capacity for research. A key finding was that in many instances, community capacity for research was already thriving and the Aboriginal Research pilot program presented an opportunity to enhance it further. Another is that the research processes being used in funded projects are developing and strengthening relationships within communities and with research institutions. The program is contributing to the overtaking of disrespectful research practices sometimes experienced by Aboriginal communities with respectful and beneficial ones, and is creating spaces for the acknowledgement of issues of power and privilege in the relationships between academia and communities.

3.2.8 Enhanced engagement with indigenous knowledge

Qualitative data on how the program is enhancing engagement with indigenous knowledge comes from the case studies. All of the projects studied are working with indigenous knowledge, although approaching it from different paths – often within the same project. As one student researcher said, *"It depends what you mean by indigenous knowledge!"* Some projects are uncovering or recovering lost or inaccessible indigenous knowledge, and making it available for reflection and analysis. In these cases, this process is sometimes seen as part of a healing process and recovery from colonization. Other projects are focusing on hearing and understanding indigenous knowledge being gained through contemporary experiences of Aboriginal people, and on the interplay between the traditional and the contemporary. Still others are furthering and creating indigenous knowledge, through new critical reflection in order to advance ideas about future worlds: *"the idea that knowledge has a purpose beyond reflecting who we once were, going beyond a lament about what was lost"*.

What is common to these engagements, at least as far as revealed by the case studies, is a profound respect for the keepers of knowledge, and a central awareness of ethical and moral questions that

accompany a research process that is generating knowledge. This is illustrated, for example, in a case project that valued those who had collected the data in the community as keepers of the knowledge, in contrast to the mainstream model, where research assistants collect information and are essentially vessels for transporting it to the investigators. The principal investigator in this case noted: "*the knowledge is what is inside yourself, it's not on a piece of paper. This has been one of the most illuminating things, this difference between western and indigenous thinking".* In another case, exploration of cultural protocols for the acquisition of culturally meaningful objects led to documentation of clan-held, community-held and individual-held knowledge about object acquisition, and deep discussion about the ownership of stories, the nature and meaning of expertise, and the implications of knowledge sharing for those who "collect" it – and their transformed role as knowledge bearers. In a third example, the research project deliberately privileges those who in a mainstream model would be considered the research "subjects" as the knowledge-holders, offering them the respect that is their due and seeking to let their knowledge be told and to be understood. This is a fundamentally different approach from the mainstream, where it is researchers who discover or create new knowledge based on their inquiry of research subjects. Moreover, the knowledge held by the knower is seen as a gift: the researcher does not know what the participants know, and can only access it by listening with respect and humility.

Another common thread in terms of engagement of indigenous knowledge is the acknowledgement and valuing of collectively held knowledge. That is, in addition to acknowledging where knowledge resides – outside of the researcher -- the approaches adopted in these projects often recognize that it is collectively held. For example, one of the pieces of knowledge collected in one of the case studies was about how to make baskets – a practice that has disappeared from the community. Seven Elders were interviewed, and each of them was able to contribute parts of the knowledge that allowed them to create a basket in the traditional way and that could not have been created by any of them individually. This example was used to contrast with a traditional research model, where an individual–based approach might have regarded the interactions among the subjects as contamination, and might have concluded that no one knew how to make baskets when in fact, collectively everyone did. In another case study, discussion about the archiving process for materials gathered through the project has sparked discussion about the meaning of archiving and the storage of knowledge, because within the tribe's traditional practices, knowledge is stored collectively, within people and the community, and is not separable to be placed away in secure storehouses.

It was also observed by case study participants that the mainstream academic model, where one's own individual ideas are to be carefully guarded from others in order to nurture a successful solo career, is at odds with an Aboriginal conceptualization of collectively held knowledge, carried by people who are part of a larger organism. That is, in the traditional model, a scholar's contribution is to be judged by the originality and the ownership of his or her research questions, while in Aboriginal research, communities will decide the research question and engage with scholars on them – the questions are thus neither original nor owned by the scholar. These reflections suggest that mainstream academic research paradigm is thus in some ways fundamentally incompatible with the notions of Aboriginal research being enacted through this program.

Dialogue and relationship-building among knowledge systems

Dialogue and relationship-building among knowledge systems are key elements of the strategies being used to engage indigenous knowledge systems. In one case study, the project has created opportunities to explore questions of mutual interest: *"we can find places to communicate, find a space to work together. It's*

challenging to find a space to engage in respectful dialogue, where there is equality". For this project's principal investigator, this is the key element supported by the Aboriginal Research pilot program: "*findings ways of creating that space".* Another case project is seeking to undo existing stereotyped contrasts between Native and non-Native ways of knowing to find universals underlying different epistemic systems, relating Aboriginal concepts such as knowledge bundles to notion embedded in western social science. Yet another project is creating linkages between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge systems about identity and its meaning for a people, by contrasting mainstream labels with the collective self-knowledge.

One of the interesting ways in which projects being conducted through the program are creating new spaces for dialogue between knowledge systems comes from projects whose aims, approaches or methods situate them not only at an interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge systems, but also at the interfaces among disciplines. For example, in one case, using an Aboriginal approach to the research question has meant that the researcher has adopted techniques that are outside the norm in her discipline -- taking her on a journey outside the comfortable boundaries of her field into a new, cross-disciplinary domain, and in a more holistic Aboriginal research value system.

That the program is contributing to interface and integration between indigenous and non-indigenous research paradigms is illustrated by some of the cases above. However, this aim of the program was also questioned. In one case study, the whole notion of contrasting indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge was seen as artificial. An Elder noted: "*The only bridge we can make between indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge is by having our community become what we want it to be".* In another case, this aim of the program was criticized in ways that raise questions about its potential to achieve greater equity and inclusiveness. These researchers noted that they still have to spend an inordinate amount of energy explaining their knowledge system and how the academy might benefit from it. For them, this raises questions about their rights and opportunities to compete as Canadians seeking knowledge opportunities. They noted the language of the program description that requires that the funded projects create a bridge between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal knowledge systems could be seen a manifestation of institutional racism still locked deeply within the design of the program. However, this research team prefers to understand it as part of the natural process of worldviews colliding, as new rocks tumble into roiling spring rivers and smooth off each others' edges: a process of mutual shaping that will take many years.

Research practices

The case studies showed that researchers involved in the funded projects are coming to recognize and negotiate the sometimes major differences between ways of conducting research. This is seen, for example, in questions raised about standard social science practice and its profoundly disrespectful process, from some Aboriginal perspectives, of arriving and asking predetermined questions without listening first. Another example is a practice told in a case study of making interview transcripts available to interviewees so that they can not only validate them but also revise them, based on new reflection, in order to maintain more of an ongoing dialogue between researcher and informant than the approach the community had experienced in the past, where the researchers take their samples and then go away. In general, the research is being carried out in ways that are consistent with what is considered proper and respectful, and in ways that are fundamentally rooted in Aboriginal ways of being and doing, for example in including and honouring Elders. Some clashes between practices have been noted: for example, in one case, with the research ethics approval process, which is essentially "*foreign and uncomfortable*" to a value system where "*our Elders are our Ethics Board"* and the Elders' views had already been sought, at the earliest stages of project formulation. Using Aboriginal research practices has meant in some cases, the

explicit recognition and embracing of the spiritual dimensions of the research endeavour, as in all human activity. Researchers in one case study noted *"we have no idea how that sounds to people who set up these programs"* but that "*it has to be done before we can ask these people about their experiences and knowledge. It's not to prove that we're Indian, it's about how we are brought up. If we do not follow the protocol, we will not be respected."* In this case, the research activities will be accompanied by prayers, and this will not be discussed outside the group as it is not the norm to do so, but they will be an integral part of the research process.

3.3 Continued relevance of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program

An overwhelming majority of all respondents in the evaluation stated that they think there is continued need for the program. This was true for 75 of 81 (94%) of the program applicants surveyed and 243 out of 261 (93%) of those conducting Aboriginal-related research who applied to SSHRC's other programs. The main reasons for this position among respondents to the applicants and non-applicants' surveys (content analysis of open-ended responses) are summarized in Table 21. These show equally strong recognition among both groups of the need to support or develop the practices or mode of Aboriginal research that are supported by the program. Applicants to the program are more likely to see a continued need to promote careers of Aboriginal researchers and students.

Table 21: Reasons for stating that there is a continued need for the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program

	Applicants to the Pilot program (n= 81)	Applicants to other SSHRC programs for Aboriginal-related research (n = 262)
General need for the program, reasons not further specified	14 (17%)	72 (28%)
Need to support or develop the practices or mode of Aboriginal research that are supported by the program	21 (26%)	72 (28%)
Need to bring research to bear on challenges faced by Aboriginal communities in Canada	17 (21%)	28 (11%)
Need to promote careers of Aboriginal researchers and students	17 (21%)	22 (8%)
Need to correct under-representation or inequity in Aboriginal research	8 (10%)	14 (5%)

These reasons are clearly related to the original raison d'être of the program, and reflect a general consensus that SSHRC's analysis of the need for, and its response to, research by and with Aboriginal people remains valid: e.g., "*From a political and a practical point of view, this program opens space for special kind of research that needs to be done"; "If we want to seriously pursue research development, because there is no way to do so in the regular programs, the second generation of this program will be very important"* [translation from French]; *"The Aboriginal SSHRC program is needed for several more years so that the body of work can become more acceptable in mainstream educational circles, for Aboriginal academics who need institutional legitimacy this is an important and valuable contribution by SSHRC".*

Reasons provided by members of the Review Committees were very similar, and highly supportive of the continued need for the program: "*I agree wholeheartedly that this program should continue. It gives a*

focus to Aboriginal research that does not otherwise exist; it ensures that more funds are devoted to these questions, and it has succeeded in its process – in having a majority of Aboriginal people around the table" ; Their responses also took into account that this evaluation is occurring too soon to be able to assess its results in terms of the research produced: "*The program is at its beginning – it's a new paradigm and we are evaluating it too soon – there are no results yet. More time must be given to the program"* [translation from French]; *"'Its still in its infancy, it needs to be continued, celebrated for its intent. If it were not continued it would be a huge loss".* Most SSHRC staff were also in agreement that the program has not yet had a chance to prove itself in terms of research outcomes, and that it continues to be relevant.

While almost all respondents argued that the program remains relevant (with several stating that it should become a permanent SSHRC program), there also exists a view that if the Aboriginal research paradigms being developed and strengthened through the program became more accepted and prevalent, that these forms of Aboriginal research should be eventually – after at least several more years of a pilot program -- integrated into SSHRC's existing programs, for example in the Standard Research Grants. This view was expressed by respondents to the applicants' survey, the non-applicants survey, and by the Relevance and Adjudication Committee members. SSHRC staff also suggested that mainstreaming into programs such as the Standards Research Grants could be a medium-term aim. The impetus for such integration would come from three sources: a concern about ghettoizing Aboriginal research; a desire to ensure that the broader research community could embrace this vision of Aboriginal research, and a wish to clearly demonstrate that Aboriginal research meets SSHRC's general standards of excellence.

Concerns about ghettoizing were sometimes strongly argued, albeit by a small minority. "*Indigenous issues, pedagogies, and knowledges are largely ignored by mainstream/whitestream disciplines; alternatively we are asked to justify our research in ways that ignore both the paucity of existing studies and the indigenous frameworks that we deploy. We shouldn't have to be ghettoized -- nor should we always have the onus of proving that we are good enough for the whitestream disciplines" (program non-applicant); "I believe that the money for this program should be redistributed to the regular programs, where we would have the possibility of doing research with Aboriginal peoples. Programs specifically for Aboriginal researchers create intellectual ghettos which marginalizes them even more and reduces the credibility of projects financed by the program. I'm in favour of eliminating this program" [*translation from French*] (program applicant); "...the program would lead politically to further Aboriginal marginalization.... i.e. generating a research ghetto for aboriginal people, which at the same time assuages institutional and state shame...." (applicant to another program).* We emphasize that the above views are those of a minority at present, but they may foretell future debate about the ongoing relevance of the program and in particular about consideration of 'mainstreaming' Aboriginal research within existing SSHRC programs.

Conclusion: Continued relevance of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program. Overall, SSHRC's analysis of the need to support, and its response to, developing the practices or mode of Aboriginal research by and with Aboriginal people was validated through the evaluation, and the findings show that this analysis and response remain valid. There is a very strong consensus among all types of evaluation participants (i.e., applicants, non-applicants, members of the Review Committees) that there is a continued need for the program and that it remains relevant. There is also recognition that the research produced through the program has yet to attain its impacts, and so that it is too soon to completely understand assess the program's value.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Program design and delivery

The results of the evaluation show that the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program design and delivery were generally very successful. Most data suggest that if the program were renewed, its basic features should remain essentially similar. The division of grants into Development and Research Grants is contributing to the program's capacity-building objectives, but it may be useful to send stronger messages about reserving developmental grants for developmental work and developing scholars, and given the multidisciplinary nature of the program, encouraging applicants to submit grants of any size under the maximum. The program description and objectives coupled with the two-stage adjudication process appeared to have successfully screened in the type of Aboriginal research being promoted by the program, and screened out research inconsistent with this vision. Review by a Relevance Committee remains critical at this time, but its role may diminish as the program matures and scholars come to better understand the paradigm. The feedback processes to applicants could have been used more effectively to support the capacity-building aims of the program and the development of the field and been better adapted to the needs of Aboriginal research.

Uptake of the program was highly satisfactory in that it solicited new research activities from researchers whose work fit the ways of conducting Aboriginal research that were being promoted by the program and largely discouraged applications that were not a fit. The program included research in most regions of the country, reflecting the overall distribution of research capacity in the humanities and social sciences. Although the program focus and the composition of the Relevance and Adjudication Committees included all three groups, most research applications were focussed on First Nations communities with relatively fewer on Métis and Inuit peoples. The areas of interest most supported by the program were 'new approaches and methods of inquiry that will build understanding of the dynamics and significance of Aboriginal knowledge" and "effective mobilization of knowledge within Aboriginal and other communities"; however no research involving "international comparative studies" was funded.

Developing satisfactory institutional arrangements for some of the organizations involved in the program presented challenges, requiring mutual adaptation on the part of SSHRC and the organizations. The partnership requirements of the program were effective in ensuring that research funded through the program was being conducted with and not on Aboriginal communities, but the data suggest that sensitivity and flexibility are needed in assessing how partnerships fit within the program.

Notwithstanding the slight degree of interchangeability between the Aboriginal Research Program and some of SSHRC's other programs, the evaluation data show that the program is in fact funding research that is quite different in approach and intent than that funded elsewhere. Indeed, the evaluation evidence suggests that the program design and delivery are effectively nurturing the development of Aboriginal research within the program paradigm.

4.2 Achievement of program objectives

Insofar as this evaluation can assess – given that it has been conducted while most research projects are still ongoing – it shows that the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program is on track to achieving its objectives. The conclusions below are summarized according to those objectives.

Research that will help develop policy in areas of concern to Aboriginal communities and other stakeholders: The potential for community benefit is central to the research endeavours funded through the program and to the processes with which the research is being conducted. A key finding of the evaluation was that in many instances, community capacity for research was already thriving and the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program presented an opportunity to further pursue areas of interest and concern. The evaluation data also show that the funded research is closely engaged with Aboriginal communities – likely more so than Aboriginal-related research not being funded through the program. Many of the projects are driven by community needs and interests; moreover, "community" is being defined and redefined in diverse ways, engaging both contemporary and traditional conceptualizations. It is too soon to tell whether the results of the research will in fact be helpful to policy development, but community members' involved in the projects believe that it will, and research teams are committed to ensuring that there is benefit to their communities.

Aboriginal leadership and participation in research, and advancement of Aboriginal scholars' research careers: The Aboriginal Research Pilot Program is characterized by significant Aboriginal participation: 94% (which may be an underestimate) of projects involve Aboriginal principal investigators, co-investigators, collaborators or partners. Scholars of Aboriginal origin were highly successful in obtaining grants, and the projects intended to involve large numbers of Aboriginal students. The evaluation data on the research processes to date suggest that capacity is being built among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars and students for Aboriginal research in the mode of Aboriginal research that the program aims to support, as well as furthering capacity to address and negotiate the differences between mainstream and Aboriginal research. Enhanced research capacity of personnel was also noted in terms of increasing links across disciplines and breaking down disciplinary silos, strengthening a multidisciplinary stream of reflection and analysis. Time will tell if their participation in this work will contribute to career advancement, but for some of those involved their visibility and legitimacy has been enhanced within their institutions and their disciplines.

Significant research training opportunities for Aboriginal students. Although the projects from the last round of competition had not yet begun to engage students, projects from the first two competition years appear to be engaging, in various roles, a large number of Aboriginal students, perhaps close to 500 in total. The case studies showed that these students' experiences were indeed significant, and that it was generally hard to separate student researchers' experiences from those of others involved, due to special valuing of their role in the gaining and keeping of knowledge. Students were also developing a critical sense, in particular to be able to critically appraise research practices and methodologies from an Aboriginal perspective, and to question the absence of culturally appropriate methodologies from existing research texts, teachings, and practice. Integration of knowledge generated through the program into teaching and curricula is helping to increase awareness and capacity for Aboriginal research among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

New, effective research partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars: The program mobilized a large number of partners in a broad range of sectors. Funded projects often involve partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars, and these partnerships are sometimes new and highly promising. However, questions were raised about the underlying message of the program requirement that funded projects create a bridge between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal knowledge systems. This issue here is that the program objectives require linking Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge systems. Some Aboriginal scholars suggested that the program should focus on developing Aboriginal knowledge systems in a self-contained way, seeing no a priori need for a link. In other words,

the program can be seen as paradoxically undermining the legitimacy of Aboriginal scholarship by necessitating a translation of it to the mainstream world, while "regular" scholars in "regular" programs are not required to make any such links.

Better understanding of how research by and with Aboriginal scholars and Aboriginal communities can and should be organized: A key evaluation finding was that in many instances, community capacity for research was already thriving and the Aboriginal Research pilot program presented an opportunity to enhance it. The research processes being used in funded projects are developing and strengthening relationships within communities and with research institutions. The program is contributing to the overtaking of disrespectful research practices sometimes experienced by Aboriginal communities with respectful and beneficial ones, and is creating spaces for the acknowledgement of issues of power and privilege in the relationships between academia and communities. Positive impacts of the Aboriginal Research pilot program on enhanced capacity for Aboriginal research through organization and infrastructure were seen in smaller and non-university organizations and within SSHRC itself, although some proposed organizational actions were not implemented. Much has been learned about working with non-academic and Aboriginal organizations, and SSHRC has put policies and mechanisms in place to support its new understandings. However, much remains to be learned, especially in terms of the interface between institutional eligibility from SSHRC's perspective and organizational capacity for research from Aboriginal and non-university organizations' perspectives. SSHRC may be encouraged to reflect on the capacities it requires for sustaining its commitment to the approach and mechanisms developed in this pilot.

Better understanding of the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and between their respective intellectual and cultural traditions: The evaluation data pertaining to the engagement of indigenous knowledge showed many ways in which the program is producing new understandings of these relationships, based on dialogue and relationship-building among knowledge systems. As the research projects are ongoing, these understandings are in most instances yet to be shared outside the funded projects; follow-up of knowledge mobilization over the next few years will allow reflection and critical assessment of the contribution of the program.

Increased awareness and appreciation of the needs, values, knowledge, experiences and contributions of Aboriginal peoples both in Canada and abroad: Again, it is probably too early to state with any confidence that the program, outside the groups that are immediately involved in the ongoing research work, has increased awareness and appreciation of the needs, values, knowledge, experiences and contributions of Aboriginal peoples (with the exception of non-Canadian Aboriginal peoples, which in operation, the program excluded). It is certainly the case however, that the program is contributing to valuing of Aboriginal knowledge and experiences, through projects that would likely not have been funded through other sources. Through multiple pathways involving dialogue and relationship-building among knowledge systems and disciplines, the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program is enhancing engagement with indigenous knowledge.

4.3 Overall relevance

SSHRC's analysis of the need to support, and its response to, developing the practices or mode of Aboriginal research by and with Aboriginal people was validated through the evaluation, and the findings show that its analysis and response do indeed remain valid. There is a very strong consensus among all types of evaluation participants (i.e., applicants, non-applicants, members of the Review Committees) that

there is a continued need for the program and that it remains relevant. The findings on objectives achievement, in particular on the success of the program in making and legitimizing a space for Aboriginal research and in nurturing the development of research capacity so that space will be able to grow, show that the pilot program has been a relevant means to attain the collective vision developed in the early dialogue. There is also recognition that the research produced through the program has yet to attain its impacts, and so that it is too soon to completely understand assess the program's value. Moreover, the findings show the program to be in line with the main elements of SSHRC's Strategic Plan, in particular the aims to: retool and fine-tune programs by expanding the diverse knowledge base; focusing on advanced learning; and building community capacity; and to create new programs and new approaches, through mobilizing knowledge for greater impact; connecting to the world; and creating research tools for the 21st century[31].

4.4 Themes emerging from the Panel of Knowledge Keepers and recommendations

The eye of the eagle

Through their discussions and deliberations, the Knowledge Keepers told us that issues and ideas such as those addressed by the Aboriginal Research program must be understood from an overarching perspective – from the eye of the eagle. They told us that this gaze, soaring above, ensures that we understand the unity of Native peoples, the relationships among all communities and all peoples, and problems and actions in their broadest possible contexts.

Benefits through knowledge sharing and education

A second important element of the Knowledge Keepers' message was that SSHRC's endeavours should work to ensure that funded research will benefit Aboriginal communities, providing guidance and knowledge and build understanding and encouragement in re-gaining pride. They stressed that better education is key to this, and that encouraging more native students to attend college and university will help them find and live their dream. They also noted that children's perspectives --- their vision and hope --- need to be considered and nurtured – and that this would benefit Aboriginals and Canadian society as a whole

The Knowledge Keepers affirmed that research is a wonderful tool and its use and dissemination is a vital issue for their communities. It is especially important that it reaches younger generations. Outreach opportunities with native communities should be further explored, particularly with isolated and reserve communities. There was great interest in developing research outputs in accessible formats such as documentaries or video, for a wider public so that results of the research produced can be shared as widely as possible. It was also raised that there was a real need to make use of the research results broadly, not only with the communities involved directly in the projects. They stressed that SSHRC should think about knowledge mobilization in the context of the Aboriginal Research program - using the knowledge and making it accessible to native and non-native communities.

In their discussion, the Knowledge Keepers pointed out that many people who could be potentially interested in the program are not aware of it, and that there are still many barriers for scholars who are not in the mainstream. It was suggested that a database of aboriginal researchers and funded research could

[31] http://www.sshrc.ca/web/about/publications/strategic_plan_e.pdf

be developed, and made accessible to interested aboriginals and non-aboriginals. This could serve in providing information on opportunities to others, such as potential applicants, partners and users of the research. Awareness could also be increased through forms of recognition or awards, focused on youth.

As many Elders have passed away in the last few years, the Knowledge Keepers stressed the urgency to ensure that traditional knowledge is recorded and shared in ways that are respectful of the spiritual dimensions of learning and knowledge creation. In their view, it is essential that the knowledge be incorporated into curriculum. These tools must be shared with the younger generation to build understanding and transfer knowledge, so that they can carry their people forward, for the next seven generations. Development or building capacity of young natives should begin as early as high school, in providing opportunities such as a research and training awareness program and exposure to research teams and related activities. This was considered a priority for native communities throughout Canada, who are faced with serious challenges and issues for the well-being of young natives. Based on respective panel members' experiences, such initiatives would provide a strong incentive for young native students to be further exposed to their own native origin, and to pursue post-secondary studies. Knowledge Keepers thus recommended that anyone researching Aboriginal culture should be strongly encouraged in developing curriculum, and making it readily available to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal People doing research

The Knowledge Keepers strongly supported the idea that the program should be encouraging Aboriginal people to be conducting research. Moreover, native scholars and professors should become role models for young native people, keeping in mind that that traditional knowledge needs to be nurtured and that learning is never finished. They agreed that more Aboriginals should be encouraged to become trained as scholars in order to conduct research themselves on Aboriginal culture and lifestyles. This would help gain respect for native values and cultures and build pride, confidence, and improve self-image.

It was also noted that SSHRC's processes create barriers for Aboriginal people to access grant funds. Personal knowledge of traditional ways and languages is not considered or valued in the application processes. Knowledge Keepers suggested that SSHRC should include criteria that assess what is expected of aboriginal scholars.

Sensitization of and learning by non-Aboriginals

The Knowledge Keepers noted that there is growing interest in incorporating traditional knowledge in policy and decision-making, and that this represents a tremendous opportunity to promote traditional knowledge in different parts of Canada and the world. It is important that all Canadians value the understanding of Aboriginal people's cultures. This, for the Knowledge Keepers, suggested that educational endeavours related to traditional knowledge include a dimension of sensitization. They stressed that it is important that Canadians learn about Aboriginal teachings today, and that traditional knowledge benefit both the government, the general public and Aboriginal communities.

Spirituality – environment[32]

The Knowledge Keepers also told us that spirituality, and in particular the relationship to the earth, to ancestors, and to insights, is an essential part of an Aboriginal approach to research and understanding. Allowing for space to explore the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of knowledge, and for recognizing the knowledge that resides in each individual, is critical to a holistic approach to learning and knowledge creation, and should be given consideration in all actions.

Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings and the deliberations of the Panel of Knowledge Keepers, the following recommendations are made for the Aboriginal Research pilot program:

1. Continuation of the existing program, with minor changes to design and delivery

1.1 The evaluation results clearly support the continued offering of an Aboriginal Research program, in the intent and spirit of the current program.

1.2 Most of the program's existing design features should be retained, including the two-stage adjudication process, the review committee composition, and the division into development and research grants. However:

- communications about the program should stress that all grant sizes are eligible for the research grants category;
- the adjudication process should reserve development grants for work that is truly developmental in nature (even if submitted by mature scholars, that it represent a development in their Aboriginal research capacity)
- the adjudication process should be enhanced to allow additional, individualized capacity-developing feedback to successful and unsuccessful applicants.

1.3 Ongoing reflection and development should continue on conditions of institutional eligibility as they relate to non-university organizations and in particular to Aboriginal organizations, so that mutually appropriate conditions of partnership can more easily be negotiated. This work could draw on learning and opportunities from other SSHRC programs, including CURA and the Northern Research program.

1.4 While generally highly successful in ensuing that the program's intents were actualized in the grants selected for funding, application and C.V. requirements, review criteria and adjudication committees' approaches should be adjusted to allow more flexibility and inclusivity in two areas: the nature of partnerships considered to be eligible, and the types of knowledge, research experiences and other experiences (such as working with Elders) considered to be valued by SSHRC and by the peer reviewers.

[32] Additional information for this sub-section was extracted from Dr. Marlene Brant Castellano's keynote address "Inclusion, Partnership, Transformation Responses to Diversity in Community-University Relations", delivered at the Community-University Exposition (CU Expo), University of Victoria, May 5, 2008

1.5 Some clarification and flexibility of program objectives is needed, in two areas. First, we recommend that the requirement that funded projects bridge Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal research be rendered more flexible to allow balance between the desire to foster dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways of knowing, and the need to allow space for the advancement of Aboriginal knowledge through its own paradigms. This will ensure that Aboriginal knowledge is considered on its own terms, and that safeguards to protect traditional "sacred knowledge" are respected. Second, the intents of the program with respect to research on non-Canadian Aboriginal peoples need to be clarified.

1.6 It is difficult to formulate a recommendation on the size of the program budget, but it seems likely that as both awareness of the program and Aboriginal research capacity increase, future funding levels may need to be increased to accommodate growing Aboriginal research capacity in Canada.

1.7 Ongoing performance measurement of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program should continue, with a focus on capturing the results of the above proposed improvements to program design and delivery. In addition, a summative evaluation should be conducted to assess the achievement of longer-term outcomes in capacity development, knowledge production and knowledge mobilization

2. Development of an Aboriginal Research Strategy

2.1 Following on the ideas in the original discussion documents, SSHRC should consider developing a more fully articulated Aboriginal Research Strategy, including and extending the Aboriginal Research program. This strategy should include opening and linking other SSHRC programs to Aboriginal Research, so that it eventually becomes interwoven throughout its entire mission.

a) The Aboriginal Research Strategy could include a pre-proposal capacity development component, offering targeted communications, outreach and support to potential applicants.

b) The Strategy should continue to reserve a central place for students, in particular Aboriginal students. Additional supports and incentives should be developed to ensure high levels of Aboriginal student participation in the program, in particular developing strategies to engage and value the contributions of undergraduate, college and high school students, and learners of all ages. Additional forms of support such as scholarships and fellowships, accompanying and integrated with the research grants program, should also be considered. As important, measures should be developed, perhaps through program requirements, to ensure that Aboriginal students are supported and mentored as they face systemic barriers and challenges.

c) Sharing of knowledge gained through Aboriginal research should receive particular attention in this Strategy, so that not only the communities who were directly involved in the funded projects but also other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities may benefit. SSHRC could, for example, consider special knowledge mobilization initiatives, perhaps in partnership, to allow honoring and sharing of research accomplishments through the program, as well as ongoing dialogue about advances in ways of knowing. This should be understood as part of SSHRC's ongoing commitment to dialogue with the Aboriginal research community, so that results of knowledge mobilization may inform future planning.

d) In the longer term, SSHRC should draw lessons from this evaluation as well as future evaluations of the program in considering the mainstreaming of Aboriginal research into its other research granting programs. Such mainstreaming would entail changes in SSHRC's organizational culture and important capacity development in SSHRC staff and peer review committees. SSHRC should use this and future evaluations of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program as a means of promoting such organizational change.

"We have to start thinking ahead, 100 years from now, seven generations thinking. If we come from a place of love and vision, then there is always a beginning. If we come from a place of faith and belief, then anything can be done". Knowledge Keeper Panel Member, to the panelists and to SSHRC, April 28 2008.

River rocks: a result of the natural process of worldviews colliding, as new rocks tumble into roiling spring rivers and smooth off each others' edges -- a long-term process of mutual shaping – with thanks to Case Studies 2 and 4

APPENDIX 1: EVALUATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Elder from Aboriginal Community:
Peter Decontie, Firekeeper of the Kitigan Zibi of the Anishinabeg First Nation

From the community:
Marlene Brant Castellano, Tyendinaga Territory (chair of Guiding Group; Mohawk)
Larry Chartrand, University of Ottawa (committee member; Métis)
Gordon Christie, University of British Columbia (committee member; grantee; Inuit)
Verna Kirkness, Fisher River Cree Nation (committee chair; Fisher River Cree)
David Newhouse (member National Round Table; chair of Indigenous Studies at Trent; Onondoga)
François Trudel, Former Director, CIERA, Université Laval (grantee)
Gail Valaskakis, Chair of 2004 and 2006 adjudication committees for Aboriginal Research, Lac du Flambeau Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa

From SSHRC:
Courtney Amo, Performance and Evaluation Officer (Project Manager), Corporate Performance and Evaluation Division
Jocelyne Manseau-Mandeville – Acting Director, Corporate Performance and Evaluation (observer)
Michael Bazant, Student Research Assistant, Corporate Performance and Evaluation Division
Walid Hammoud, Performance and Evaluation Officer, Corporate Performance and Evaluation Division
Jessica Hogue, Research and Evaluation Assistant, Corporate Performance and Evaluation Division
Nicole Michaud, Performance and Evaluation Officer, Corporate Performance and Evaluation Division
Craig McNaughton, Acting Assistant Director, Strategic Grants and Joint Initiatives Division
Laurent Messier, Program Officer, Strategic Programs and Joint Initiatives, responsible for Aboriginal Research program
David Moorman, Policy Analyst, Corporate Policy, Planning, and International Affairs Division
Keren Rice, Head, Aboriginal Studies at University of Toronto (former Council member)
Marc Fonda, Former Acting Director, Strategic Grants and Joint Initiatives Division (observer)
Murielle Gagnon, Director, Strategic Grants and Joint Initiatives Division (observer)
Wayne MacDonald, Director, Corporate Performance, Evaluation, and Audit Division (observer)
Gisèle Yasmeen, Vice-President of Partnerships (observer)

APPENDIX 2 – DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

1. Evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program: Case study interview guides

This interview is part of the evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program. SSHRC is doing this evaluation to see whether the program has been successful so far, from the point of view of all those who have been involved in it. Your responses will be confidential.

A. Principal and co-investigators

1. To begin, can you describe the project and your role in it?

2. What has been your experience in the project so far – how are you finding it, in general?

3. How is this project responding to or working with the interests and needs of its community?

4. How has this community been involved in the project?

   Has it been, and how has it been, involved in:
   - research planning
   - execution
   - analysis
   - interpretation
   - application
   - mobilization

5. How is the research you are doing engaging with indigenous or Aboriginal knowledge?

6. What relationships are being built in the research – between people, between ideas, between knowledge systems? How are these relationships being built?

   What are the challenges of doing this? What successes or advances have you had so far?

7. How is the way the research is being done different from a mainstream approach to research in this area?

8. Would you say that this research is building links between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge systems? If so, how? Can you give some examples integration of indigenous and non-indigenous research paradigms? If not, why not?

9. Is this research having an impact on research methods – yours or others'? If so, can you give some examples? What differences is this making to the knowledge being generated through the research? If not, why not?

10. Do you think that this research is contributing to changing the way Aboriginal research is seen in your research area? If so how? If not, why not?

Specifically, do you think that it is contributing to greater recognition of the value of Aboriginal research in the mainstream research context? If so, how? Can you give examples of how it has changed teaching and research in your research domain?

11. Do you think that being involved in this project is contributing to the community's capacity to be involved in research? If so, how? If not, why not?

12. What ways have been put in place to ensure that the community will benefit from the research?

13. Is this project, overall, helping to develop capacity for Aboriginal research? If not, why not? If yes, for whom, and how?

14. Has participating in the research project contributed to <u>your</u> research capacity? If not, why not? If yes, in what ways?

    If yes, would you have been able to get this benefit in other ways? If so, how? If not, why not?

15. Do you think participating in the project has had, or will have, any impact on your research career? How?

16. Overall, how well do you think the Aboriginal Research Program has succeeded in responding to the interests of Aboriginal communities and scholars?

17. Overall, do you think that there is continued need for the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program? Why or why not? Could other programs support your work in this area just as well?

Evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program:
Case study interview guides

This interview is part of the evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program. SSHRC is doing this evaluation to see whether the program has been successful so far, from the point of view of all those who have been involved in it. Your responses will be confidential.

B. Students, research assistants and fellows (to be adapted depending on level)

1. To begin, can you describe the project and your role in it?

2. What has been your experience in the project so far – how are you finding it, in general?

3. How is this project responding to or working with the interests and needs of its community?

4. How is the research you are doing engaging with indigenous or Aboriginal knowledge?

5. What relationships are being built in the research – between people, between ideas, between knowledge systems? How are these relationships being built?

   What are the challenges of doing this? What successes or advances have you had so far?

6. How is the way the research is being done different from a mainstream approach to research in this area?

7. Would you say that this research is building links between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge systems? If so, how? Can you give some examples integration of indigenous and non-indigenous research paradigms? If not, why not?

8. Is this research having an impact on research methods – yours or others'? If so, can you give some examples? What differences is this making to the knowledge being generated through the research? If not, why not?

9. Do you think that being involved in this project is contributing to the community's capacity to be involved in research? If so, how? If not, why not?

10. What ways have been put in place to ensure that the community will benefit from the research?

12. Is this project, overall, helping to develop capacity for Aboriginal research? If not, why not? If yes, for whom, and how?

13. Has participating in the research project contributed to <u>your</u> research capacity? If not, why not? If yes, in what ways?

    If yes, would you have been able to get this benefit in other ways? If so, how? If not, why not?

14. Do you think participating in the project has had, or will have, any impact on your future career? How?

15. Overall, do you think that there is continued need for the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program? Why or why not?

Evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program:
Case study interview guides

This interview is part of the evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program. SSHRC is doing this evaluation to see whether the program has been successful so far, from the point of view of all those who have been involved in it. Your responses will be confidential.

C. Collaborators and community partners

1. To begin, can you describe the project and your role in it?

2. What has been your experience in the project so far – how are you finding it, in general?

3. How is this project responding to or working with the interests and needs of its community?

4. How has this community been involved in the project?

   Has it been, and how has it been, involved in:
   - research planning
   - execution
   - analysis
   - interpretation
   - application
   - mobilization

5. What is your view of the partnerships that are being developed through this research project?

6. How is the way the research is being done different from other research projects you have seen going on in your community?

7. Would you say that this research is building links between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge systems? If so, how? Can you give some examples integration of indigenous and non-indigenous research paradigms? If not, why not?

8. Do you think that this research is contributing to changing the way research is seen in your community?

9. Do you think that being involved in this project is contributing to the community's interest in being involved in research? If so, how? If not, why not?

10. Has your community been able to engage with the research teams and ensure that they use appropriate, respectful research practices?

11. What ways have been put in place to ensure that the community will benefit from: a) having the research project be conducted with it, b) the research findings? How do you think your community will benefit from this research?

12. Overall, how well do you think the Aboriginal Research Program has succeeded in responding to the interests of Aboriginal communities and scholars?

13. Overall, do you think that there is continued need for the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program? Why or why not?

Evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program:
Case study interview guides

This interview is part of the evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program. SSHRC is doing this evaluation to see whether the program has been successful so far, from the point of view of all those who have been involved in it. Your responses will be confidential.

D. Representative of the institution hosting the grant.

1. To begin, can you describe the project and your role in it?

2. What has been your experience in the project so far – how are you finding it, in general?

3. How is this project responding to or working with the interests and needs of its community?

4. How is the way the research is being done different from a mainstream approach to research in this area?

5. What is your view of the partnerships that are being developed through this research project?

6. Has your organization been able to set up partnership arrangements that are acceptable to you, to the research partners, and to SSHRC?

7. Do you feel that Aboriginal Research Program is contributing to a better organizational capacity for Aboriginal research, in your organization and the other organizations involved? If so, how? If not, why not?

8. Do you feel that Aboriginal Research Program is contributing to a better infrastructure for Aboriginal research, in your organization and the other organizations involved? If so, how? If not, why not?

9. Do you think that this research is contributing to changing the way Aboriginal research is seen in your organization? If so how? If not, why not?

   Specifically, do you think that it is contributing to greater recognition of the value of Aboriginal research in the mainstream research context? If so, how? Can you give examples of how it has changed teaching and research in your organization?

10. Overall, how well do you think the Aboriginal Research Program has succeeded in responding to the interests of Aboriginal communities and scholars?

11. Overall, do you think that there is continued need for the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program? Why or why not?

2. File Review: Structured template

Note: the file review was entered into an Excel spreadsheet of which this is a mockup.

File number	Applicant name	No. in team	Focus: FN, Métis, Inuit, non-status-other	Aboriginal origin: 0 = not clear or not stated, 1 = yes, 2 Non-Aboriginal			Students	
				PI	Co-applicants	Collaborators	Total no.	No. Aboriginal
1					1. 2. 3. 4. ……	1. 2. 3. 4. …		
2								
…..								
259								

3. Evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program: Interview guide for program applicants

Hello! This interview is part of the evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program. SSHRC is doing this evaluation to see whether the program has been successful so far, from the point of view of all those who have been involved in it. You applied to this program in (year(s)) and we would like your opinion on some aspects of the program. Your responses will be confidential.

1. Why did you decide to submit a proposal to this particular program?

2. Had you previously submitted this proposal to another competition at SSHRC or another granting agency?

   ❑ No.
   ❑ Yes. If so, where?

2. Did you consider submitting your proposal to other granting programs or agencies?

   ❑ No.
   ❑ Yes. If so, why?

3. Were any of the following a factor in your decision to submit your proposal to the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program?

   ❑ No ❑ Yes Fit of my research with the themes
   ❑ No ❑ Yes The experience and qualifications of me and my co-applicants
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Size of the grants offered
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Duration of the grants offered
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Fit of my research with the ways of doing Aboriginal research being promoted by the program
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Program seemed to be targeting researchers of Aboriginal origin
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Expected involvement of Aboriginal students in my project
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Other reasons: _____

4. After the proposal was reviewed, did you receive feedback from the Review Committees? What did you think of the feedback you received?

   (If applied to more than one year, ask for each year feedback was received).

5. Did you re-submit this grant proposal after this?
   ❑ No.
   ❑ Yes. If so, where?

6. Overall, do you think that there is continued need for the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program?
   ❑ No. Why not?
   ❑ Yes, but with changes. Which changes?.
   ❑ Yes, as is. Why?

Évaluation du Programme pilote de recherche sur les réalités autochtones du CRSHC :
Guide d'entrevue pour les postulants au programme

Bonjour! Cette entrevue fait partie de l'évaluation du Programme pilote de recherche sur les Autochtones du CRSCH. Le Conseil procède à cette évaluation afin que tous les participants puissent déterminer si le programme a porté fruit jusqu'ici. Vous avez soumis une proposition de recherche à ce programme en (année(s)), et nous aimerions connaître votre opinion sur certains de ses aspects. Toutes vos réponses seront à titre confidentiel.

1. Qu'est-ce qui vous a incité à soumettre une proposition à ce programme en particulier?

2. Aviez-vous déjà soumis cette proposition à un autre concours du CRSHC ou d'un autre organisme subventionnaire?

   ❑ Non.
   ❑ Oui. Si oui, à quel(s) programme?

2. Avez-vous songé à soumettre votre proposition à d'autres programmes ou organismes subventionnaires?

   ❑ Non.
   ❑ Oui. Pourquoi?

3. Est-ce qu'un ou plusieurs facteurs, énumérés ci-dessous, ont joué un rôle dans votre décision de soumettre une proposition au Programme pilote de recherche sur les réalités autochtones?

   ❑ Non ❑ Oui La concordance de mes recherches avec les thèmes
   ❑ Non ❑ Oui Mon expérience et mes compétences ainsi que celles de mes codemandeurs
   ❑ Non ❑ Oui Le montant de subvention offert
   ❑ Non ❑ Oui La durée des subventions offerte
   ❑ Non ❑ Oui La concordance de ma recherche avec les façons de conduire de la recherche autochtone promues par le programme
   ❑ Non ❑ Oui Le programme semblait cibler des chercheurs d'origine autochtone
   ❑ Non ❑ Oui La participation prévue des étudiants autochtones dans mon projet
   ❑ Non ❑ Oui Autres raisons : _____

4. Après l'examen de votre proposition, avez-vous reçu une rétroaction des Comités d'examen? Qu'avez-vous pensé de cette rétroaction?

   (si la personne a soumis plus d'une fois, demander pour chaque année de soumission)

5. Avez-vous ensuite resoumis cette proposition de subvention?

   ❑ Non.
   ❑ Oui. Où?

6. En général, pensez-vous qu'il y existe un besoin continu du Programme pilote de recherche sur les réalités autochtones?

- ❑ Non. Pourquoi?
- ❑ Oui, mais avec des changements : lesquels?
- ❑ Oui, tel quel. Pourquoi?

4. Evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program: E-mail survey of other program applicants

This survey is part of the evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program. SSHRC is doing this evaluation to see whether the program has been successful so far. According to a keyword search of SSHRC files, you applied for a (program name) grant in (year) a related research area. We would like to know why you chose to not submit to the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program. Your responses will be confidential.

1. Did you consider submitting your proposal to the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program?

   ❑ Yes
   ❑ No

2. Were any of the following a factor in your decision NOT to submit your proposal to the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program?

   ❑ No ❑ Yes Was not aware it existed
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Fit of my research with the themes
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Was seeking workshop, not research grant, funding
   ❑ No ❑ Yes The experience and qualifications of me and my co-applicants
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Size of the grants offered
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Duration of the grants offered
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Fit of my research with the ways of doing Aboriginal research being promoted by the program
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Program was targeting researchers of Aboriginal origin
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Expected involvement of Aboriginal students
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Relative prestige of the programs available
   ❑ No ❑ Yes Other reasons: _____

3. Were you a co-applicant on any other proposals submitted to the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program?

   ❑ Yes
   ❑ No
   ❑ Not sure

4. Overall, do you think that there is continued need for the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program?
   ❑ No. Why not?
   ❑ Yes. Why?

Évaluation du Programme pilote de recherche du CRSH – Réalités autochtones:
Sondage par courriel - postulants à d'autres programmes

Ce sondage fait partie de l'évaluation du Programme pilote de recherche sur les Réalités autochtones. Le Conseil procède à cette évaluation afin de déterminer si le programme a porté fruit jusqu'ici. Selon une recherche par mots clés dans les fichiers du CRSH, vous avez fait une demande auprès du (nom de programme) du CRSH en (année) dans un domaine de recherche connexe. Nous aimerions connaître les raisons pour lesquelles vous avez choisi de NE PAS présenter votre demande au Programme pilote de recherche sur les Réalités autochtones. Toutes vos réponses seront confidentielles.

1. Avez-vous songé à soumettre votre proposition au Programme pilote de recherche sur les réalités autochtones?

   ❑ Oui
   ❑ Non

2. Est-ce qu'un des facteurs suivants a joué un rôle dans votre décision de NE PAS soumettre votre proposition au Programme pilote de recherche sur les réalités autochtones?

❑ Non	❑ Oui	Je ne connaissais pas son existence
❑ Non	❑ Oui	La concordance de mes recherches avec les thèmes
❑ Non	❑ Oui	Je cherchais des fonds pour un congrès ou atelier, pas pour la recherche
❑ Non	❑ Oui	Mon expérience et mes compétences ainsi que celles de mes codemandeurs
❑ Non	❑ Oui	Le montant de subvention offert
❑ Non	❑ Oui	La durée des subventions offerte
❑ Non	❑ Oui	La concordance de ma recherche avec les façons de conduire des recherches autochtones promues par le programme
❑ Non	❑ Oui	Le programme ciblait des chercheurs d'origine autochtone
❑ Non	❑ Oui	La participation prévue des étudiants autochtones
❑ Non	❑ Oui	Le niveau de prestige des programmes disponibles
❑ Non	❑ Oui	Autres raisons : _____

3. Avez-vous participé à d'autres demandes de subvention au ^programme Réalités autochtones à titre de co-demandeur?

   ❑ Oui
   ❑ Non
   ❑ Incertain

4. En général, pensez-vous qu'il existe un besoin continu du Programme pilote de recherche sur les réalités autochtones?
   ❑ Non. Pourquoi?
   ❑ Oui. Pourquoi?

APPENDIX 3 – CASE REPORTS

Only cases approved by the project teams for release are included here.

Evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program:
Case study report 1 – Broad – *Creating Indigenous Knowledge Networks: Action Research for Building Strengths*

1. Overview

This Development Grant, awarded in the 2004 competition, has been an evolutionary step in a larger program of work in which the Principal Investigator and community partners had been involved for several years. The initial project, called Understanding Strong Indigenous Communities (USIC)[33] had been funded by a SSHRC Rethinking Productivity Strategic Initiative (2001-2004, $582,429) as well as numerous other partners, including Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). As that grant ended, the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program grant was seen as providing the USIC team, and in particular its Community Oversight Committee (involving representatives from the participating First Nations communities: see below) with an opportunity for a phase of reflection about what had been learned and how it could be communicated, as well as about the future direction of the project. An aim of the grant was to produce a pilot project as a first application of a development model resulting from the reflection phase. This intent to see the findings applied was driven by investigators' view of their ethical responsibility to ensure ownership of the research findings by the communities: *"you can't take knowledge from people in communities and then just take off with that knowledge".*

The USIC grant had been involved in eight First Nations communities across Canada, including the Batchewana First Nation, in the Sault Ste Marie area of northern Ontario. Although three of these communities withdrew during the course of the USIC project, five of them were in the process of completing the project at the time the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program grant was awarded[34]. As the key activity of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program grant, those partners participated in a three-day workshop allowing a collective reflection of how the learnings could be respectfully and usefully disseminated within the communities. As only half of the funding applied for was awarded to the project ($13,800), subsequent meetings that had been planned were not held. The discussions at the workshop came to the recognition that each of the communities would need to take its own direction in this work, aligned with its interests, culture and resources.

Within the Batchewana First Nation, it became clear that although the research team had believed that they had engaged the community in the USIC research process and had generated a great deal of community interest, the level of awareness in the general community, outside of its administration, was lower than they had expected: *"It still wasn't all the community's story, we didn't feel that <u>they</u> knew it"*. This led the team to decide to produce a video, using this as a capacity-building opportunity to engage community members in video production and the communication of research-anchored messages through this medium. A substantial amount of additional funds were secured (through contract work undertaken for INAC, among others) to permit training of community members and production of the video, which was almost complete at the time of the case study. In some ways, this production fulfills the aims of the pilot project portion of the Aboriginal Research grant that could not be carried out due to the budget reduction. This was very important to the community members involved: the investigator noted that a community co-investigator had

[33] http://www.usic.ca/

[34] See : Broad, G., Boyer, S., Chattaway, C. (2006) We Are Still the Aniishnaabe Nation: Embracing Culture and Identity in Batchewana First Nation. Canadian Journal of Communications, 31(1), 35-58.

said: *"I want us to finish this research. So many things are begun and not completed".* The community researchers interviewed indeed feel that the work is not yet finished, and that much more could be done to carry the work farther, and that many more people could be involved – indeed "*it would take 5 to 10 years to complete and start other projects*". The other participating communities have not been able to raise the funds necessary to carry this work forward. Community researchers in the Batchewana community have been contributing volunteer time to moving their project along.

As the activities funded directly through the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program grant are but a part of a stream of ongoing action research, the case study does not aim to separate that funding contribution, but rather examines the entire process to which the grant has contributed.

2. Community involvement and contribution to community capacity to engage in and benefit from research

Over and above the substantial individual-level skills development that occurred through the training of and experienced gained by community members in collecting and analyzing the data in the USIC project and in the video production, the process contributed to collective research capacity. This was in large part through the Community Oversight process developed in the USIC project and carried out through the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program grant. The Community Oversight Committee is an open mechanism for guidance of the research process, where any community member who is interested may participate. It was conceived as a means to ensure diversity of points of view and a balance of power with the formal community governance in the research guidance process, recognizing that some Aboriginal communities are characterized by concentrated leaderships and dominant families. The research team reported directly to the Community Oversight Committee, who then linked to the band leadership. The capacity to organize this mechanism still exists in many communities, and is seen as an enduring capacity enabled by the research process.

According to the community researchers interviewed, for the Batchewana community the research experience has been positive and rewarding. The research was generally carried out in ways that were consistent with what is considered proper and respectful, for example through the involvement of and offerings to Elders, and the theoretical perspective that had been adopted. One participant noted that it had been carried out in ways that she had been taught to do Aboriginal research. Another noted that the USIC training had been very motivating. According to the community researchers, much was learned in the USIC phase about the community and its strengths and resources. Moreover, "*it identified why they are strong".* The Development Grant allowed more complete sharing of the results with the community and then to have the community decide together whether the portrait was complete or had some missing elements, and more generally to appropriate the research results as part of their identity as a nation: "*it also empowers us as a people, the recognition from outside that we have capacities, see our successes. Because everything about us is usually negative, often very negative".*

As mentioned above, there is a strong desire among the community members interviewed to see that this research process can continue to evolve and grow: "*new ideas would enhance the research. There are so many research questions we have, that we can use to go back and educate others. Different offshoots that enhance the original and keep going*". The experience has thus clearly contributed to community interest in continuing to engage with research, as well as to an incipient frustration that there appears to be no further funding to get it done.

Capacity for Aboriginal research has also been gained outside the Aboriginal community. For the university-based, non-Aboriginal researchers who are searching for ways to be allies of Aboriginal communities, the capacity gained through the project has opportunities to explore questions of mutual interest: *"we can find places to communicate, find a space to work together. It's challenging to find a space to engage in respectful dialogue, where there is equality".* For this project's principal investigator, this is the key element supported by the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program: "*findings ways of creating that space".* The Aboriginal community researchers also noted that the importance of developing capacity for Aboriginal research in non-Aboriginal researchers: "*the researchers have to have both the qualifications of the institutions and the acknowledgement of the Aniishnaabe way of living. Non-Aboriginal researchers can be engaged in it, but they have a lot to learn".*

This research experience has also contributed to this community developing its capacity to reflect and act on ethical issues related to research, especially about the meanings and implications of participation and non-participation. In a similar vein, the research process has developed a stronger critical sense among the community researchers involved: they have learned how to critically appraise methodologies from their Nation's perspective, and to question the absence of culturally appropriate methodologies from existing research texts, teachings, and practice. Some dissatisfaction was expressed with some aspects of the USIC research process in this regard: for example, the initial introduction of the project in the community "*at the start, no one understood it. It made no sense. It needs to be brought in by a community member. It was difficult to get people interested";* or having a southern-based researcher who had not been part of the data collection process facilitate the sessions to discuss the findings.

An important contribution to community capacity development enabled through this project was the opportunity it created for First Nations community members to develop relationships with other First Nations communities. For some of those involved, this was the first time that they had visited another First Nations community – underscoring that while there are many relationships between communities at political and leadership levels, they are rarer among community members not involved in community governance: "*they were able to talk to other indigenous researchers, talk about their satisfactions, and sharing challenge."* For the community members, it offered a unique opportunity to see, from their interactions, how other communities see them – a contribution to the sense of positive identity being developed through the research process.

3. Engagement of indigenous or Aboriginal knowledge

The USIC project had involved focus groups and survey research in each community. The Aboriginal Research Pilot Program project sought to engage the knowledge about the strengths of the Batchewana community by recognizing that those who had collected the data in the community had become keepers of the knowledge. In contrast to a mainstream research model, where research assistants collect information and are essentially vessels for transporting it to the investigators, this approach recognized the role of these community members vis à vis the knowledge and the community. As the principal investigator noted: "*the knowledge is what is inside yourself; it's not on a piece of paper. This has been one of the most illuminating things, this difference between western and indigenous thinking".* The research participants' role in shaping the video was thus central, and the video production was also very unlike the production of a mainstream documentary, in that the process of making it became a space for sharing knowledge about the community's strengths.

In addition to acknowledging where knowledge resides, the approach adopted in this project recognizes that it is collectively held. For example, one of the pieces of knowledge collected during the USIC phase was about how to make baskets – a practice that has disappeared from the community. Seven Elders were interviewed, and each of them was able to contribute parts of the knowledge that allowed them to create a basket in the traditional way and that could not have been created by any of them individually. This example was used to contrast with a traditional research model, where an individual–based approach might have regarded the interactions among the subjects as contamination, and might have concluded that no one knew how to make baskets when in fact, collectively everyone did.

The early outputs from the USIC project have been methodologically focused, and the strengths-based approach to understanding identity has attracted attention and is enabling actors in Aboriginal policy to engage with knowledge about Aboriginal communities in new ways. For example, the team was invited by Health Canada to contribute to the development of an international suicide prevention policy for indigenous peoples through presentation of their research approach. In another example, the Pilot Program project's principal investigator gave an invited keynote address at the 2004 Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO) conference[35] . The approach has been applied, and is evolving, through projects undertaken by the investigator's local team such as an evaluation of the Children's Aids Society. The strengths-based outlook is evolving into a community empowerment approach, which in this particular evaluation has led to policy and practice changes in local community service delivery organizations. There has also been uptake of the research methods among social economy researchers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. The Aboriginal Research Pilot Program grant will also result in process-based outputs, based on the transcription of the multi-community meeting.

4. Contribution to development of capacity for Aboriginal research

The involvement of non-Aboriginal researchers and students is having several types of impacts on capacity for Aboriginal research.

Situated in an institution and program where half of students are of Aboriginal origin, this research process is seen as having particular benefit in teaching: "*We are trying to design a curriculum that meets the needs of our Aboriginal students, and our depth of understanding has been greatly influenced".* This has been especially helpful with respect to research methodology courses: "*the courses that I teach have been totally enriched".* Many students come to the investigator for advice related to research methodology in Aboriginal contexts. The introduction of the knowledge gained through the research process in community economic development classrooms has also contributed to more open dialogue among all students about issues facing their communities.

According to the principal investigator, for non-Aboriginal PhD students involved, the opportunity to work closely with First Nations communities has been in some cases revelatory, contributing to their capacity to be more comfortable working with these communities and to teach First Nations students more effectively.

For the non-Aboriginal principal investigator, the experiences of this project, in particular a critical reflection on the USIC project and the subsequent phases, are leading to some deeper reflections. These are related to the role of non-aboriginal scholars in Aboriginal research, and the tension between the traditional

[35] « CANDO is Aboriginal-controlled, community-based and membership driven, and is directed by a national regionally represented volunteer board of elected EDOs representing region of Canada." , http://www.edo.ca/about-cando

academic requirement of having total control over the research process, and the requirement of authentic Aboriginal partnership that there be no question of control. Despite the obvious success of the relationship with the community, her distance from the community has also been a struggle for the investigator to come to terms with: *"I learned from this that we are not community people. Even if you have good "community client" skills; you are not in the same location, not in the same relationship, as the people in that community. Its hard to find your space, and it feels very lonely".*

5. Continued need for the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program

Those interviewed for this case study are strongly convinced that there is still a need for the Aboriginal Research Pilot program. While capacity for Aboriginal research has been steadily increasing, especially in terms of the numbers of Aboriginal researchers graduating with research training, this team feels that a critical mass has not yet been reached. Moreover, while for events a such as SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Workshop Day at the annual Social Sciences and Humanities Congress are highly attended, they are more highly attended by scholars of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal origin, indicating a continuing need for decolonization of Aboriginal research. This team, located in a small northern university with little infrastructure to support the preparation of grant submissions, noted as well that SSHRC processes challenge smaller institutions whose faculty lack the necessary supports to complete applications, and prevent many scholars from becoming interested in applying to regular granting programs.

It was also underlined that there are many benefits of the program outside an Aboriginal context: that the learnings from it are universal : "N*othing I have learned is without relevance for non-indigenous people".*

Evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program:
Case study report 2 – Heavy Head - Itsinikssiistsi: remembranced offerings and generous feedings, the role of narrative exposition in Blackfoot knowledge production

1. Overview

This three-year Research Grant was awarded in 2005. It has its origins from dialogue with SSHRC throughout the course of the discussions and consultations behind the position paper that led to the creation of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program.

Through several interrelated streams, the research program is examining Blackfoot narrative styles and methods of gaining, keeping and sharing knowledge (i.e., research methodologies), in the context of the Blood Tribe in southern Alberta. Benefiting from the unique characteristics and history of the Tribe, it aims to untie existing contrasts between Native and non-Native ways of knowing (e.g. stereotypes about Aboriginal "oral culture",) to find universals underlying different epistemic systems. It is being conducted as a set of inter-related case studies, each focusing on a different aspect of narrative exposition in Blackfoot knowledge disciplines[36]. The case studies have adopted a variety of methodological approaches, including traditional western social science methods and traditional Blackfoot methods. From this work there is an emerging balance between experiential, inherited and sought knowledge that also bridges Aboriginal and western social science. It will produce a major ethnographic manuscript, now in the process of preparation, as well as other writings, presentations, and productions. Team members have been invited to present results of their work in several venues in Canada and the US, and several presentations are now available[37].

2. Community involvement and contribution to community capacity to engage in and benefit from research

The notion of community involvement in this research program can be understood in several ways. It is first important to note that while there is certainly interplay with non-Aboriginal research, the work is being carried out by and for the Red Crow College research group, in the broader context of the Blood Tribe. The community in this case is indistinguishable from the research program: "*they are intertangled and coincident*".

According to those interviewed, the project has and will have many reverberations within the community, as it is seen as part of a very long-term process of developing and integrating traditional and mainstream education systems within the community. The work builds on and supports the development of an adult higher education pedagogy that is grounded in Aboriginal traditions and that intersects with non-Aboriginal traditions. The people centrally involved are rooted in both mainstream and Aboriginal research and knowledge traditions. For example, in one of the case studies, the narrative of elders who lecture in Kanai Studies courses is being examined, to understand how narrative is played out in modern classrooms. Some material has already been integrated into curriculum at Red Crow College and in courses being

[36] A Blackfoot knowledge discipline is a community of thinkers involved in addressing certain sets of questions, bringing years of expertise in the question to it.
[37] Itsinikssiistsi: remembranced offerings and generous feedings, the role of narrative exposition in Blackfoot knowledge production ; Naamitapiikoan: Blackfoot Influences on the Psychology of Abraham Maslow.

developed at the University of Lethbridge. It was also noted that some of the knowledge generated within the project is not considered appropriate to be shared outside the community and will remain within.

The program has many linkages to other projects and research endeavours. For example, it has worked with the Alberta Archives Association to produce the Blackfoot Awakening Toolkit, including an interactive tutorial for high school students[38]. Another connection is related to traditional plants, in collaboration with the Galileo Educational Network. These educational resources take the learning acquired through the research and make it more widely accessible through educational experiences. Academic partnerships are also in place with CURA at the University of Lethbridge[39] and the University of Montana's Trail Tribes Project.[40]

3. Engagement of indigenous or Aboriginal knowledge

The project is working with two main sources of information: narrative records collected by community members from Elders and guest lecturers from highly respected Blood elders, and ongoing, socially embedded participant observation. In the former, over 1500 hours of audio recording and 900 hours of video recording are available for analysis, from sessions where Blackfoot Elders were called together for analysis and counsel for the tribe. These sessions are rich sources of elements of tradition, values and beliefs about specific issues or community problems. These sessions incorporate the traditional practice of visits, where people come together in a spiritual way to respect each other and the community. Some narrative recordings have also originated out of the research process itself. These materials will form a permanent archive within the community.

In Blackfoot epistemology, knowledge is held in bundles that contain understanding about *"how to live well in this place"* – highly localized knowledge that understands all things animate and inanimate to be essential members of the local ecosystem. This knowledge is to be formally passed to all those entering the knowledge discipline. Knowledge that people invent for themselves outside of this context is considered to be dangerous unless there is evidence that it is adapted to the local context. This is in direct contrast with much of mainstream social science, which mainly values knowledge which can be generalized outside of a local context. While all of the project's case studies are exploring this tension, one of them is dealing directly with the relationship between narrative and place. This has involved finding sacred sites and bringing respected Elders to them to experience them, through their narrative or stories about those experiences. A documentary video has been produced describing the Blackfoot people's relationship to and involvement with the sites (and some of the consequences of energy development in the Blackfoot territory)[41]. According to testimony in the video, this experience is helping community members regain a relationship with the land and thus strengthen their identity. As one Elder states in the film; and, one community member later echoes as a learning: *"you really have an identity problem when the land doesn't know who you are anymore".*

A key distinction between this epistemology and that of mainstream social science is that it is not fragmented into disciplines. For example, all knowledge bundles deal with anthropological questions – theories of the human condition -- in some way, whereas in western science this is carved into fields that

[38] http://blackfoot-awakening.ca/
[39] http://www.outil.ost.uqam.ca/CRSH/Detail.aspx?Cle=19429&Langue=2
[40] http://www.trailtribes.org/
[41] Kahsinnooniksi. Available from the project team.

are distinct from others, e.g., anthropology is different from chemistry. Links between this holistic understanding and mainstream thinking have been explored, for example in work showing how Blackfoot culture may have influenced a major western theorist[42].

The project is also exploring ideas about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives on knowledge-keeping. The work with the Alberta Archives Association related to archiving processes has sparked discussion about the meaning of archiving and the storage of knowledge. Within the Blackfoot tradition, knowledge is housed collectively, within people and the community. It is not separable to be placed in secure storehouses, as is the case for traditional mainstream archives.

4. Contribution to development of capacity for Aboriginal research

This program has contributed to the development of Aboriginal research capacity by intensifying the opportunities for the scholars involved to concentrate on research activities. It is felt that although the work would have proceeded without the SSHRC grant, its presence has enabled the group to engage in more intensive learning. The project has also enabled higher learning with the Blackfoot, where members of the research team have undertaken intensive high-level training as part of their engagement in the knowledge disciplines. It has funded bursaries to students who have been able to become engaged directly in the research, making a direct contribution to it.

Organizational capacity for this research program was an issue from SSHRC's perspective, but not the institution's, in that the institution did not initially meet SSHRC institutional eligibility criteria. Eligibility was awarded on a probationary basis, pending conclusion of satisfactory arrangements regarding intellectual property and research ethics. There were also issues around its recognition as a postsecondary institution. According to the researchers involved, this process was not necessarily negative and illustrated *"a need for both parties to be able to respect the standards of each others' communities."*

The research team described their experiences in accessing this opportunity for capacity development: *"in getting the problem respected"* by SSHRC, and proposing a research program that would be sufficiently palatable to a review committee while remaining sufficiently respectful of the knowledge traditions involved. Discussions with SSHRC also played a role in shaping the project into one that would not be regarded as a "*fishing expedition' by a review committee"* and that could be considered a dialogue between research traditions. Support and encouragement from Blackfoot elders were key to naming and shaping the project.

On the other hand, the team acknowledges a feeling that they have to spend an inordinate amount of energy explaining their knowledge system and how the academy might benefit from it. This raises questions about their rights and opportunities to compete as Canadians seeking knowledge. Indeed, the language of the program description requires that the funded projects create a bridge between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal knowledge systems, which in some ways requires manipulating Aboriginal knowledge into mainstream outputs. The team members noted that if this language were not there, it is likely that a quite different project would have been submitted. At some level, this could be seen as a manifestation of institutional racism still locked deeply within the design of the program. However, the research team prefers to understand it as part of the natural process of worldviews colliding, as new rocks tumble into rolling

[42] http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/web/winning/story_e.asp?story_id=91&subject_id=0&researcher=heavy%20head&university_id=0&province_id=0&keywords=

spring rivers every year and smooth off each others' edges: a process of mutual shaping that will take many years to achieve smoothness (or *àiksimmotsiyop ; "we shape each other"*). However, ideally in the future the researchers would like to see equal weight to knowledge traditions from all Aboriginal communities, because *"currently access to the funds is limited to mainstream approaches".*

5. Continued need for the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program

While generally supportive of the idea of an Aboriginal research program, this research team feels that a main shortcoming of the program is that SSHRC has not necessarily made a long–term agreement to work with the funded groups. The pilot program has not been followed by a longer term commitment to Aboriginal research, and while it is a one good step, it is one among many preceding and following. There are, however, few other alternatives: this research team feels that this may be the last time that they will be able to access SSHRC funding. They feel that their work will continue to be fruitful over many years, but that application elsewhere is likely to be unproductive as research organizations are generally unable to dialogue directly or create ongoing relationships with grantees.

Evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program:
Case study report 3 – Trosper, Bateson - Contemporary and traditional values of a landless Cree First Nation in Northern Ontario

1. Overview

This Research Grant was awarded in the 2005 competition. It is focussing on the values of the Missanabie Cree Nation, a Cree Nation whose traditional lands extend from the James Bay area to the central area of the Chapeau Game preserve in Ontario, but whose land claim is still in the process of being reconciled by the Ontario and federal governments. The community members are widely dispersed geographically across North America, with only a few very small groups living in proximity of their land. The aim of the research project is to determine the current members' range of values toward their land, particularly in areas that have implications for development and environmental policy.

2. Community involvement and contribution to community capacity to engage in and benefit from research

This project originated directly in the community. Discussions had been ongoing within the community about how to make choices about their future orientations to the land in light of the expected land claim settlement: for example about how to approach issues such as logging and mining. With only a single annual gathering to bring many community members together at one time, the discussion process was not seen as effective: *"everyone was throwing up ideas, and there were complaints of ideas not being heard. They wanted a way for Chief and Council to know what people's ideas were".* A community member successfully petitioned the Council that research be conducted to help the community understand its values, both traditional and contemporary, in relation to the land, to facilitate future discussion and decision-making. This person then sought out an academic supervisor, enrolled in a Masters program, and submitted the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program proposal to be able to carry this out, with full support of the community throughout.

The project is thus essentially the Master's thesis of the community member become student investigator. The grant is allowing him to take leave of a full-time position in another province and concentrate on the research, under the mentorship of his research supervisor. (Notwithstanding his extensive research background in related areas of Aboriginal community development, it is of note that the principal investigator was sought out because he is of Aboriginal origin.) Fully engaged in the Masters' program, the student investigator has completed course work while working on the development of the research tools for the project. Preliminary data collection for the project began at the annual community gathering in August 2007, and will continue over the next year, including during the 2008 gathering. The principal investigator is supporting the student through regular communication and has visited the community with him, and was very well-received.

The project is being conduced under the guidance of a nine-member Advisory Committee composed Elders and other community members, including the Deputy Chief, who responded to a community–wide request for members. They will have an ongoing role in the project, being actively involved in refining the research questions, shaping the research design and participating in the data analysis. The Committee will also support sharing of the results with the entire community at the annual gathering (likely in 2009) and through other communication mechanisms.

The researchers were cautious in making claims about whether the project is responding to the needs and interests of the Missanabie Nation, preferring to defer judgment to when the study is closer to completion. The Elders interviewed are however highly optimistic that the project will produce results that they will find of continuing value. There is a keen interest in finding and strengthening connections to the land among a people who have become so disconnected from it. Those interviewed expressed particular interest in *"making the link between the past and the present":* having the research show them how the values that they now live by have origins in traditional values from the past time when their people were living on the land, and in how these are being expressed in their lives now: *"the contemporary experience of traditional values*" as one Elder described it. This is seen as key to helping the community move forward: *"we can't go back to the old ways, but we can know what we want our First Nation to be".* Another said: "*we are contemporary people, there is no turning the clock back, but we are still distinct as a group. It's all related to identity*". These Elders expect that the results will be tied together with other research results and used at several levels. For the Council, the results are directly tied to the decisions they will make about the economic opportunities they will try to provide to band members so they can move to the newly created reserve, for example investments in different forms of economic development. At the same time, the project is expected to help the Nation develop an identity as a community, and as *"who we are as human beings – this is part of our community's healing"*.

3. Engagement of indigenous or Aboriginal knowledge

The project is applying an existing mainstream social science methodology to the understanding of indigenous values. It is a novel application for both the students and supervisor, and they expect to learn much about the methodology through the community's response to it. As the student researcher noted: "*this is not a traditional way for the community to pass knowledge*", and it remains to be seen how successful it will be. For both investigators, this project will allow testing of the methodology's potential for generalization to other settings*: "Not just for our community but there are 30 to 40 other landless communities. If one of them in the same situation asks to see the report, it will be a success".*

At a conceptual level, the question of how the project is engaging indigenous knowledge was a complex one, because as the student researcher said, *"It depends what you mean by indigenous knowledge!"* The project is certainly engaging this community in the naming and examining of its values, and so can be said to be engaging an indigenous community in an exploration of its knowledge. On the other hand, there is a question at the heart of the research about traditional and contemporary values related to the land, the interplay between the traditional and the contemporary, and the nature of contemporary values given that indigenous identity may no longer be linked in the same ways to the land, given the 'urbanization' and dispersion of the community. An Elder noted: "*again I think it's the urbanized Indians, myself included, a lot of us think that mainstream is not a bad thing, it's given us tools. The only bridge we can make between indigenous and non- indigenous knowledge is by having our community become what we want it to be".* For the student researcher, his work differs from mainstream approaches in that ethnographic studies of indigenous people in relation to their land are usually conducted with people on the land. He also acknowledged the challenge of "*being in the mix too":* studying western scientific method, doing university based research, and needing to respond to the community need underlying the project.

4. Contribution to development of capacity for Aboriginal research

The initiative for this project having come from the community, it is clear that much capacity was already present. However, it is important to emphasize that the presence of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program

was key in this project actually occurring. It was the principal investigator who directed the project toward the Pilot Program, recognizing the fit with the program aims. And, it was clear from the interviews that the student researcher would not have entered the Masters program in order to be able to submit a research grant had the program not existed. Although unsure of what his career path might look like after the project, he is interested in continuing to work with First Nations' communities in some capacity, which he had not been doing previously.

With respect to the question of whether the project is contributing to how research is seen within the community, its was noted that while there had been some initial scepticism in parts of the community, this had been dispelled partly because of a previously successful student project that was underway at the time (related to governance), and very much because of the student researcher's position: "*There is a lot of apprehension about studies. But if a member of our own community does it, there's less concern, because people feel that people in our community will help our community move forward.*"

Community members interviewed indicated that it is a matter almost of principle that the community endorse and support initiatives that are indicative of younger people's engagement with the community and its development. This is very important to them given their historical lack of a physical community and their wish to ensure that the ties that do bind the community members together can continue to be strengthened, especially among young people: "*the young people – we have to address this – they have little connection to the land. We're so busy on the land claim but these projects; they're giving us the perspective of young people, giving us the wisdom of younger people. It's part of our vision for our community".* The community itself is thus a key driver in the development of Aboriginal research capacity.

5. Continued need for the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program

Those involved in this project emphasized that this project and its expected benefits to this community would simply not have occurred in the absence of the program, and that it is unlikely that it would have been submitted to any other SSHRC program. For them, it was a very strong argument in support of its overall relevance to their community and Aboriginal communities in general. It was noted by community members that as long as there are applicants to the program, this would indicate that it was needed and should be continued.

Evaluation of SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Pilot Program:
Case study report 4 - Wimmer et al: *Reflections of Indian teacher education program graduates in band controlled schools within the Prince Albert Grand Council*

1. Overview

Funded in the 2005 competition as a Development Grant, the main aim of this two-year project is to contribute to effective teacher education in Aboriginal contexts. It is documenting the experiences of beginning teachers, graduates of the Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of Saskatchewan[43], in their first two years of teaching in band-controlled schools. Although the project had initially focussed on the Prince Albert Grand Council, its focus has now expanded to be as inclusive as possible of the experiences of beginning teachers across the range of settings where they have actually been hired. The findings will help identify supports and gaps in the teacher education program, connecting graduates' experiences in the program to their experience in schools, and ultimately contribute to articulating a model of Aboriginal teacher education. This will be important in the evolving context of the development of the reserve-based school system in Saskatchewan and other Aboriginal teacher education programs across Canada. The project is also seen as contributing to the broader public education system.

The research team is composed of four investigators, two of whom are Aboriginal and two who are not (including the Principal Investigator), and two of whom are students in the graduate Education program at the University of Saskatchewan. Three team members had been working together for some time and had been reflecting on the research problem; they saw the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program as an opportunity to pursue their questions with external funding. They approached the Principal Investigator as a potential collaborator, based on his record. Their synergy as a team was immediately evident, and led to the successful application.

The first year of the project has been dedicated to developing the research framework and materials, based on in-depth pilot interviews, and in locating the sample of newly graduated teachers and planning the data collection. The procedures for data collection were piloted during the spring of 2007 and collection began in earnest in fall 2007, with a sample of teachers who have completed at least one year of teaching. This will involve in-person individual and group interviews, in the 22 communities throughout Saskatchewan where the sample is now located. All team members will participate in the interviews.

2. Community involvement and contribution to community capacity to engage in and benefit from research

This project is understood by the team members to be most fundamentally driven by the needs of Aboriginal communities, "*so that they can live in better ways."* In practice, the research team members acknowledge that their conceptions of "community" are fluidly composed of elements of physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual space – and there are different viewpoints among them in these conceptualizations. However, the project can be seen as responding to the needs and interests of several intersecting communities: the communities in which the graduate teachers will teach Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children; the highly cohesive and supportive community formed by the Indian Teacher Education Program; and finally, the university community itself, in which the team members hope to see changes in perspective about the value of Aboriginal approaches to research and teaching as well a better

[43] http://www.usask.ca/education/itep/

understanding of Aboriginal communities and contexts. The Indian Teacher Education program itself is grounded in Aboriginal values and culture, with a relationship-driven model of student development and support, seeing the students who are sent to it from and by their communities as people who are "*stepping in to the flowing river of the historic development of native education",* thus adding a chronological dimension to the notion of community.

An example of how the project may respond to the needs and interests of these communities is related to early findings about how beginning teachers are affected by, and quite unprepared for, dealing with competing jurisdictional interests within Aboriginal communities, between political governance and the education function. Naming and addressing these issues as part of the teacher education process may be of benefit not only to teachers of Aboriginal origin, but also to the many non-Aboriginal and other teachers who will, given Saskatchewan demographics, be teaching Aboriginal people. A second example has to do with how new teachers experience working with exceptional children in their classrooms, in particular how well prepared they are to work with the paraprofessionals who support those children. Another example is about the non-standardization of teacher working conditions across bands as employers, and the potential impacts of the resulting inequities in the wider teacher professional environment. These issues are all seen as having direct links to community capacity development, well beyond the immediate education function.

The research team expects to share the results of their work in all their communities. Most immediately, the results will be used to inform practice within the Indian Teacher Education program, and then within the College of Education. Results of the project will be shared with participants, with the aim of showing how their voices have contributed to the whole, and how the whole will make a contribution to positive change. The entire research process - engaging graduate teachers and their communities in the research along and then sharing the results – is seen as *"sending a message of respect and empowerment,"* which helps to develop and strengthen relationships within those communities and with the Indian Teacher Education Program and the university more generally. The research team recognizes that many Aboriginal communities have little respect for, or scepticism about, university-based research, and see this project as "*an opportunity to make things different, for making lives better, for capacity building and empowerment".* And, in the academic community, conventional papers and conference presentations are expected.

3. Engagement of indigenous or Aboriginal knowledge

The research project is intentionally engaging indigenous knowledge systems in its approach: in keeping with the respect that is due to the knowledge-holders – the beginning teachers -- it seeks to let the knowledge be told, to reflect on it and understand it, and to integrate it into the practice of Aboriginal teacher education. This is a fundamentally different approach from the mainstream, where it is researchers who discover or create new knowledge based on their inquiry of research subjects. Rather, it *"privileges graduate teachers as experts"* about how practice, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, can be improved. Moreover, the knowledge held by the knowers is seen as a gift: the researchers do not know what the participants know, and can only access it by listening with respect and humility.

In terms of research methods, this approach has led to some profound questioning of conventional social science methods, especially as the Aboriginal investigators confront what they have been and are being taught in their graduate methods classes and their understanding of how knowledge is and ought to be gained, and then share their consternation among the research team: *"I find some things about research methods are so odd. For example, asking for an answer to your own question - even in terms of having a conversation, this is <u>not</u> how we have a conversation".; "The research methods class was such a stretch in*

my thinking – I thought I was totally missing the boat – it was hard to fit it with my understanding." Another set of learnings has to do with the research ethics approval process, which is essentially "*foreign and uncomfortable*" to a value system where "*our Elders are our Ethics Board*" and the elders' views had already been sought, at the earliest stages of project formulation. For all members of the research team, this learning contains important messages regarding learning about ethical approval for both the academy and the community. Furthermore, the non-Aboriginal principal investigator sees one of his roles as taking what is learned from this project to inform mainstream teacher education.

Still in terms of research method, the project is being conducted in ways that are fundamentally rooted in Aboriginal ways of being and doing. This has meant, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal team members, recognizing and fully embracing the spiritual dimensions of all human activity, including university/community research. To affirm this, the team will attend a sweatlodge with an Elder to offer pipe and seek community approval for their work, and as part of their work with participants, every teacher being interviewed will be informed that protocols with an Elder have been followed. The researchers noted that *"we have no idea how that sounds to people who set up these programs"* but that "*it has to be done before we can ask these people about their experiences and knowledge. It's not to prove that we're Indian, ''It's about how we are brought up. If we do not follow the protocol, we will not be respected."* The research activities will be accompanied by prayers, and this will not be discussed outside the group as it in not the norm to do so, but they will be an integral part of the research process.

4. Contribution to development of capacity for Aboriginal research

Aboriginal co-investigators in this project are finding that it has impacted them in many ways. One of the most important is gaining the ability to navigate between the real world of family and community life with its own values and approaches, and the academic world, which operates with a rather different set of values. At one level, this is involving familiarizing the less-experienced members of the research group with university research process, mentoring them into the insiders' circle: *"it lets us be who we are culturally, but guides us through the maze of academia; we are learning to negotiate our cultural identity in an academic environment".* At another level, this experience has surfaced many areas of tension and conflict between the two worlds (for example, about standard social science practice and its profoundly disrespectful process of arriving and asking predetermined questions without listening first: see above). All these investigators see the research endeavour as an opportunity to develop a practice that can resolve these lived tensions in positive ways, at both a community level: e.g., "*making changes that are better for the university and are better for my people";* and an individual level: *"we're required to learn to fit., but we need to maintain a sense of self while being respectful of academic ways".* The non-Aboriginal members of this team feel that they have the most to learn from their colleagues, and indeed state that they are learning a great deal. They are rethinking their ideas about mainstream research process, and developing new and *"more honouring*" ways of working with people. For all involved, this process of capacity development has been one of great joy.

From a more conventional perspective, the project is contributing to the academic careers of all involved. The principal investigator moved to a larger university after the project was awarded. The prestige of obtaining a SSHRC grant has raised the career profile of the research team members as well as their unit within the university. This has countered some of the institutional racism that participants have experienced within the larger institution, where "*faculty outside the program saw us as not at the same level …. This gives our colleagues a different perspective on us, moving into the academic mainstream".* Both

students are benefiting from the experience of being involved in a research process, with one of them noting that she is the first university graduate in her family.

5. Continued need for the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program

This research team feels that there is a continued need for the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program. For them, it shows that SSHRC is serious about recognizing that its existing programs have privileged traditional scholars, "*gatekeeping out"* Aboriginal researchers who are not in tenure track positions in mainstream institutions. They used their own experience to illustrate how Aboriginal researchers must tackle SSHRC applications: a non-Aboriginal researcher with an attractive mainstream track record was drafted into the position of Principal Investigator so as to improve their adjudication chances, even though all four consider themselves to be equal members of the team: *"we don't think about who is the PI versus the others".* They recommended that SSHRC adopt greater real flexibility in who is considered an applicant, and that it more fully recognize the costs associated with conducting Aboriginal research in this mode.

The research team also emphasized that if, as the program seems to suggest, SSHRC is genuinely interested in supporting development of Aboriginal community capacity, that it should recognize that "*its really important that the initial money be followed up by a practical result, that what comes out of the research is followed through, that they are committed to not quitting, not start and stop but moving forward progressively*". They remarked that pilot projects are fundamentally disrespectful; a neo-colonial approach that denies control to those it purports to benefit because the gains are temporary and contingent. They see the program as having provided a great opportunity to learn by seeking out the keepers of that knowledge, to be followed by sustained and sustainable action.

APPENDIX 4: MEMBERS OF THE PANEL OF KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

Herb Belcourt (Sherwood Park, Alberta)
Clarence Chabot (Gatineau, Québec)
Kanahsohon Kevin Deer (Kahnawake Mohawk Territory, Québec)
Imelda Perley (Maliseet Tobique First Nation, New Brunswick)
Mary Ellen Googoo (Mi'kmaq Membertou First Nation, Nova Scotia)
Peter Irniq (Former Commissioner of Nunavut; Ottawa, Ontario)
Margaret George (British Columbia)

Firekeeper: Peter Decontie (Firekeeper of the Kitigan Zibi of the Anishinabeg First Nation, Maniwaki, Québec)